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Culture in ELT: Which C? Whose C?

When it comes to teaching culture and English, many teachers and learners are faced with an immediate choice: which culture to learn?

By Lindsay Clandfield

There have been two occasions when, while learning a foreign language, I can remember "learning" culture. The first was when I was at high school in Toronto, learning French.

I remember that we had lessons on the different famous buildings in Paris. We also had to read books (or excerpts from books) by great French writers such as Victor Hugo or Albert Camus. We learned about Napoleon, the Louvre, and Monet.

As for the real, live people from France, however, there wasn't much. I think that I must have viewed them as rather two-dimensional. The men smoked *Gauloise* cigarettes and rode bicycles around Paris wearing a striped shirt and beret. The women were tall, wore hats with little veils and walked their dogs (usually poodles) around the French capital.

Some 12 years later I was learning Spanish in Guatemala. I had been offered a teaching job in neighbouring Mexico but had to improve my Spanish.

In Guatemala my experience learning culture didn't include any

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From the Editor

For most teachers summer is the ideal time to get caught up on a lot of things. Sleep, for example. Pleasure reading, too. And updating one's professional knowledge in a relaxed way, enjoying the luxury of not mapping out tomorrow's grammar lesson.

With this issue of *Contact* we explore a number of theoretical and practical themes affecting our lives as ESL practitioners.

Two articles examine aspects of culture in English language teaching. In the first, **Lindsay Clandfield**, a Canadian now living, teaching and writing in Spain brings insight and experience to the notion of cultural awareness in ESL teaching. He poses the question: whose culture – and which – should we be teaching in our classrooms? The article explores distinctions between *big C* Culture and *little c* culture and presents practical classroom activities to help learners acquire the skills of intercultural competence.

In the second article, **Marlene Toews Janzen** of the University of Ottawa questions the cultural appropriateness of communicative language teaching (CLT) practices for Japanese teachers of English. She focuses on classroom activities designed for speaking. The author contends that the training of teachers from non-English-speaking locales needs to be context-sensitive and that adaptation to local cultural realities is an important component of successful teaching and learning

John Allan and **Scott Webber** let us in on some Internet-related secrets for creating and adapting materials for classroom use. In what they term a "Speed Geek" approach to the matter, they survey a baker's dozen web-related resources that will enhance English language learning across a range of applications and contexts.

Pursuing the theme of computer-assisted language learning, **Kathleen M. Moran,** Coordinator of Conestoga College's Communications Department, invites teachers of writing to join the technological environment inhabited by many – if not most – ESL and ESP learners. In

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her primer on using technology in the writing classroom, Moran compares the functions and usefulness of various online environments.

Classroom-based assessment is the focus of an article by **Lisa Kattelus** in which she outlines some of the purposes, stages and tools that teachers can use to assess classroom events such as hands-on learning projects. She describes a classroom project called *The ESL Café*, developed collaboratively with a group of highly-skilled adult learners. Applying a multi-faceted approach to assessing their language skills, their teacher discovered a remarkable range and depth of language growth.

Our *In the Classroom* feature by **Judy Pollard Smith** presents a novel idea for stimulating classroom discussion through the use of famous quotations. In two sample lesson plans she demonstrates the richness that a short text such as a quotation can have in prompting both thought and language at more complex levels with adult learners.

Every teacher operates from some type of theoretical base, whether or not it is coherent, developed and consistent. In a reflective essay, **Karen Thomson** examines the most important theoretical influences on her own development as a teaching professional. She surveys the dominant approaches to second language teaching and learning over the last fifty years, concluding that each has played some role in her own understanding and teaching practice.

Four book reviews round out the content of this issue. **Robert Courchêne** recommends a recent novel by Amulya Malladi, *The Sound of Language*. Set in contemporary Denmark, it is a story of hope, tradition and the power of language to heal as well as wound. An Afghan immigrant woman forms an unexpected alliance with an elderly beekeeping widower. She confronts ghosts from her past as she learns a new language and confronts an alien culture.

Martha Staigys reviews *Torn Between Two Worlds*, an inside view of the challenges faced by exiles from Latin America over the last thirty years as they integrate into Canadian life. The author, Jose M. Borgoño, documents their struggles, failures and small victories through a combination of personal vignettes and social-cultural analysis. This book informs you but also tears at your heart.

Language Logic is a recent book by Robyn Matthew, also known as 'the word nerd.' The book is sub-titled *Practical and Effective Techniques to Learn Any Foreign Language*. Reviewer **Evelyn Pedersen** applauds Matthew's approach and declares that "the insights she shares are timely and practical, and so *logical* I could have kicked myself for not thinking of them!" For ESL teachers or anyone setting out to learn another language, this collection of strategies makes sense of the process and challenges of second language acquisition.

And finally, **Fran Marshall** provides a synopsis of the riches contained in the 3-volume collection of *Language Profiles* by Cathy Haghighat. An additional compilation of six of the profiles titled *Language Matters!* has just been published in honour of the United Nations declaration of 2008 as The Year of Languages.

On a personal note, I am grateful for the continuing support, critical insight and contributions of Robert Courchêne. His association with *Contact* spans more than 25 years, and we salute his role in advancing the professional development of our field.

May you be refreshed over the summer and approach the new school year with rekindled enthusiasm and commitment.

Clayton Graves

Editor

Culture in ELT: Which C? Whose C? (cont'd)

(Continued from page 1)

great Guatemalan writers or poets. Nor did it include much Guatemalan history or cultural symbols. What I did learn a lot about was the culture of everyday life: how people did their shopping, how they prepared food, what to bring and do if invited to someone's house. Part of this was explicitly taught in the classroom, but, as I was in Guatemala at the time, much was learned by simply living there.

These two experiences reflect different views of what culture is. A distinction can be made between what is sometimes called *big C* culture (literature, music, film and symbols) and *little c* culture (customs, institutions and everyday life (see UNESCO declaration on culture, 1976).

The ethnographer J. Spradley gives further distinctions as to what culture is. He describes it as embodying three main aspects of human experience. These are *cultural artefacts* (what people make and use), *cultural knowledge* (what people know) and *cultural behaviour* (what people do). My French learning experience contained plenty of *big C* culture of knowledge and artefacts but not much *little c* culture or cultural behaviour, while my Spanish classes in Guatemala were the other way around.

"...much was learned by simply living there."

What both experiences had in common was that in each case I was taught culture in the traditional sense of the term.

This traditional idea of teaching culture means that:

1. Cultural information (whatever it is) is imparted in the classroom.
2. The culture taught (whatever aspect you choose) is that of the country whose language you are learning.

Which culture to learn?

When it comes to teaching culture and English, many teachers and learners are faced with an immediate choice: which culture to learn? When I was teaching new immigrants in Canada, the choice was easy. The cultural content of my classes was usually Canadian culture, primarily of the small "c" variety.

When I was teaching abroad in Europe and Latin America, the most popular choices, for historical and economic reasons, were British or American culture, with a mixture of small "c" and big "C" culture. Most international English Language Teaching (ELT) materials also have a strong bias towards British or American culture. The teacher and learners seem to be faced with a relatively easy choice.

But is it that easy? The more you unpack the notion of culture in teaching the more difficult it becomes. One problem is that there is no such thing as a monolithic national culture. People belong to any number of cultural groupings, for example: age, gender, regional origin, work, social class, religion and ethnic background. A failure to recognize

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this leads to the perpetuation of stereotypes.

The image I had of the French from high school was stereotypical and incorrect.* There is also a danger that ELT materials continue to perpetuate similar stereotypes about Britain, and the United States especially.

Furthermore, it is true that English now occupies a unique position as a world language. English is no longer viewed as being the property of what the linguist B. Kachru (1992) calls the "Inner Circle" countries: Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This has led some to call for the teaching of English as an International Language to be devoid of cultural content entirely, a 'neutral' or 'supranational' variety of English.

But others argue that even the emerging international variety of English is a North American sub-genre that threatens other languages and homogenizes culture. And yet, with culture featuring prominently in most school curricula as an integral part of the core English program, it can hardly be ignored.

So what is a culture-sensitive teacher to do? Speaking for myself, I certainly don't want my students to have the same kind of stereotypical view of English or Canadian or American people as I did of the French when I was at school. Nor do I want to be seen as pushing cultural values "down their throats" either.

And yet, learning about culture can be motivating. Acquiring cultural capital is generally thought of as a *Good Thing*. And is it possible to teach language at all without teaching culture?

Another way: intercultural competence

There is another way of teaching culture which doesn't necessarily mean abandoning potentially motivating cultural material. It draws on the notion of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997).

In simple terms, intercultural competence is the ability to communicate and operate effectively with people from another culture. More and more cross-cultural encounters are taking place in today's world and for many different reasons:

- Technology (internet, email, chat, mobile phone technology) enables people to communicate faster, cheaper and further than before.
- Globalization brings people from different cultures into contact with each other more than in the past to do business.
- Increased movement of populations and immigration bring people from different cultures into contact with each other, sometimes causing tension and conflict.
- Modern warfare and media coverage (the 'War on Terror', the Iraq war) have the effect of simplifying and narrowing definitions of culture into good and bad, right and wrong.

The fact that English is the dominant international language means that

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"Becoming interculturally competent...means abandoning the idea that everybody sees the world in pretty much the same way."

* As I discovered when I finally went to France one day. I'm now married to a French woman who doesn't smoke or have a poodle!

(Continued from page 5)

English is being used more and more in the above interactions and that intercultural competence is needed to successfully negotiate them.

Becoming interculturally competent involves recognizing differences and variations within one's own culture and within other cultures. It's about occupying what is called "a third place," a principled and detached view across cultures. It means abandoning the idea that everybody sees the world in pretty much the same way.

What does this mean in practical terms for the English classroom? McKay (2002) argues that cultural material in class should be used to encourage students to reflect on their own culture and establish a "sphere of interculturality" (Kramsch 1993). In this sense, intercultural competence is not so much about knowledge as about skills.

"Becoming interculturally competent involves recognizing differences and variations within one's own culture and within other cultures."

The skills that should be developed to enhance intercultural competence include:

- Asking questions.
- Listening and seeking clarification.
- Negotiating and identifying common ground.
- Avoiding prejudging or stereotyping.

Some practical examples on how to incorporate a more intercultural approach in our teaching follow.

What culture do you want to learn?

At the beginning of a course, ask students what aspects of culture they would like to learn about. This could take the form of a questionnaire. For example,

1. **During your English course, which countries' culture would you like to learn about?**
2. **What aspects of culture would you like to learn about?**
   - ❑ How people live
   - ❑ Important writers, artists and musicians
   - ❑ Popular culture (TV, music, film)
   - ❑ Food
   - ❑ Celebrations and holidays
   - ❑ Other

During the course, you can then try to bring in texts that reflect what the students wanted to learn about. Better still, you can ask students as part of their homework to bring in texts or pictures with this kind of cultural information to share with the class.

Explaining culture

If intercultural competence involves skills like seeking clarification, then learners need the language to help them do so. This can be done in part by teaching useful phrases such as:

So, you mean that...
Let me see if I understand. You mean that...
Is that similar to...?
I see. Is it like...?

An activity to incorporate these phrases could involve the learners working in pairs, student A and student B. Stu-

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dent A chooses a culturally-related area that he/she could talk about and begins to tell student B. Student B must listen carefully to A and seek clarification during the presentation, beginning with the sentence stems above.

This of course works best if student A is talking about a different culture to student B (for example, an aspect of life in a country that student A has visited or lived in that student B doesn't know).

Intercultural role-plays

Role-plays could involve asking students to talk about aspects of their culture to each other with one person or both taking on a "role". The "Explaining culture" activity above could be made into a role-play if student B takes on the role of a foreigner. Other possibilities include:

- A foreign visitor has been invited to his/her host's house for dinner. What should he/she do? What should he/she bring?
- A guide has been asked to include important phone information (public phone locations, important numbers etc.) in an English brochure for tourists. What should be included?
- A foreign visitor is always late for meetings, appointments etc. His/her guest is annoyed. How can they resolve the problem?
- A new immigrant is looking for work. How do they go about this? What rights do they have and what important information should they know?

This is especially useful for Business English and English for Specific Purposes.

Gender bender

Ask students to go through their course book or grammar book and pick out sentences which talk about men or women. Tell them to change all the references to men into women and vice versa. For example,

> *She stopped work after their first child.*
>
> *His favourite hockey team was the Toronto Maple Leafs. He went to the game every week with his son.*

become

> *He stopped work after their first child.*
>
> *Her favourite hockey team was the Toronto Maple Leafs. She went to the game every week with her daughter.*

Ask students to discuss in pairs how the sentences are different and what assumptions about men and women are being made in the original (and changed) sentences.

Follow this up by asking students to say whether they think these assumptions are true for their country.

A typical American?

Ask students to work alone and make a list of five or six characteristics of a "stereotypical" person from their country. Examples for an American person could be:

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Classroom Activities

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drinks Coke
goes to baseball games
reads People magazine
watches CNN

For a Canadian, it might be:

drinks coffee and eats Timbits
goes to hockey games
reads The Sun newspaper
watches CBC

When students have finished, ask them to work in pairs and compare their lists. Then ask them to discuss the following questions.

Are these characteristics true for you?
Do you know anyone who conforms to this stereotype?
Why do these stereotypes exist?
Is it possible to say that there is any one "typical" person from your country?

"Teaching culture is a journey..."

A closing word

Teaching culture is a journey, but it needn't be — as teacher and author Luke Prodromou puts it — a "one-way trip to the 'target culture' (usually Anglo-American)."

Building on the students' own culture and its relationship to others can make the journey much more exciting, and inspiring. That's what intercultural teaching is, or should be, all about.■

FURTHER READING

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Lindsay Clandfield was born in London, UK, but grew up in Toronto. He has a degree in Peace and Conflict studies from the University of Toronto. Having worked with refugees in Croatia and Guatemala and taught in Mexico, he now teaches in Spain and writes for the website *Onestopenglish* and *The Guardian Weekly* newspaper. He has published ESL learning materials for both Oxford and Macmillan publishers, and co-authored the award-winning book, *Dealing with Difficulties*, with Luke Promodrou (Delta).

Context-Sensitive EFL Teacher Education: Adapting Speaking Activities

By Marianne Tilleks Janzen

A. Underlying Questions

In 2005 I was invited to teach in the MEXT program at the University of Ottawa. The goal of this 4-month program, sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT), is to help Japanese junior and senior high-school English language teachers to integrate communicative language teaching (CLT) into their classes.

The invitation came with assurances that my considerable language teaching experience — at all levels, in three languages, and in Canadian and international contexts — would be valuable for the participants. I had also done L2 teacher education with pre-service Canadian and foreign-trained teachers. Nevertheless, I had reservations. My context and experience are not those of the Japanese teachers. I have never taught in Japan nor observed their classes. Who was I to suggest how they should adapt their teaching methods and approaches? I agreed to work in the MEXT program and I have learned a lot, but I have also discovered that my original hesitation reflected a more widespread unease about the place of CLT in TEFL.

Questions about the place of CLT in TEFL were raised in a number of articles in the 1990s. Robert Phillipson argued in 1992 that imposing CLT in EFL contexts was another form of Western imperialism. He called it "the native speaker's burden" (Phillipson, 1992). Others also questioned whether CLT was universally applicable. (Cook, 1996; Ellis, 1996; Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996; Seidlhofer, 1999). The assumption that other cultures are just like one's own is a common error; perhaps the idea that Western definitions of communicative competence are shared by every society and that CLT methodology is universally applicable reflects this same faulty assumption (Ellis, 1996). Kramsch and Sullivan argued that the communicative approach in EFL may simply "impose discourse forms that are typical of Anglo-Saxon communication practices" (1996, p. 200). Even Widdowson, an early pioneer and outspoken advocate of CLT, concluded that the concept of 'authentic' language use in non-Western contexts "privileges native-speaker use and imposes its norms at the global level" (1994, p. 387). Seidlhofer (1999) warns that Western teachers should "resist a simple transfer of [Inner Circle] teaching approaches and attitudes" to very different EFL contexts (p. 233).

"The assumption that other cultures are just like one's own is a common error..."

B. Guiding Principles

Given these extensive reservations about the place of CLT in EFL education, what guiding principles can be identified for its implementation? Seidlhofer (1999) calls us to consider two criteria in each context: the cultural appropriateness of CLT and the local institutional realities.

I will begin with 'cultural appropriateness.' What might it look like? Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) discussed this in relation to one complex EFL context, that of Vietnam. Here, college students needed to learn appropriate English language use to enable them to do business with both native (Western), and non-native (Southeast Asian) speakers of English. The latter aspect is important because English has become the

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lingua franca of business and politics throughout the Indochina region. In order to function in both contexts, the students needed to learn the grammar and vocabulary of standard English, but they also needed to "retain control" of how the language was used in each of the two contexts (Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996, p. 211). Clearly, 'authentic' and 'appropriate' language use had to be defined by *their* socio-cultural contexts, not by that of their foreign-trained EFL teacher.

In addition to its importance for language use, 'cultural appropriateness' also applies to pedagogical practices. Like other scholars, Little and Sanders (1990) found that "unfamiliar activities with a communicative or process orientation were not highly valued by students from traditional backgrounds." The gap between the familiar and the intended learning experience was too large. It "resulted in a breakdown in language production and frustration for the learner" (as cited in Ellis, 1996, p. 214). Interestingly, this is an issue that adult ESL (LINC) teachers in Canada also wrestle with. Marilyn Lewis (2007) has described it as using "student-centered methods with teacher-centered ESL students" (book title).

"...English has become the* lingua franca *of business and politics throughout the Indochina region."

In addition to the issue of cultural appropriateness there may be curricular and institutional constraints such as large classes with limited class time, little exposure to English outside the classroom, and strong parental and institutional expectations related to high-stakes university entrance exams which often have a heavy emphasis on English reading comprehension and a grammar-translation approach. Such countervailing factors will create difficult dilemmas for teachers trying to use 'pure' CLT in EFL contexts.

An increased awareness of these cultural and institutional realities has led to many calls for a more 'realistic' or 'appropriate' methodology, one that is focused on the cultural and institutional contexts of the learners. (Bax, 1995; Brown, 1995; Gill, 1993; Granger, 1996; Holliday, 1994; Jenkins 1996; Seidlhofer, 1999; Widdowson, 1994) The basic argument is that appropriate methodology in TEFL should reflect the CLT emphasis on learner-centered teaching combined with respect for local cultures.

The task of EFL teacher education is then to help teachers to become more effective in their own local contexts. This includes helping them to think about how they might adapt CLT principles and techniques in their English classes. To do this, EFL teacher educators must be "context-sensitive" or "client-centred" (Bax, 1997, p. 232). Context-sensitive educators are characterised by: (i) empathy with the experiences of others in language learning and teaching; (ii) extensive cross-cultural and EFL experience; (iii) an "accepting and affirmative" attitude toward cultural differences; and (iv) a good understanding of the particular context (Ellis, 1996, p. 217; Phillipson, 1992).

What might context-sensitive teacher education look like? Since, as in my case, EFL teacher educators may not know the EFL teachers' context well, they should work collaboratively with the teachers; otherwise they may encounter what Jarvis (1986) called "passive resistance", a common response to educational innovation (as cited in Ellis, 1996, p. 214). Teacher educators need 'buy-in' from the participating teachers.

Obviously, this involves a balancing act. On the one hand, teacher educators need to respect and listen to the teachers' feedback and insights: after all, they are the experts about their situation; it is *they* who can suggest context-appropriate adaptations to new

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ideas or activities. On the other hand, teacher educators must be willing, at times, to challenge the teachers and to introduce new methods and activities which might be useful to them.

C. The Japanese Context

What is the particular context of the Japanese teachers who participate in the MEXT program? One of the major objectives of MEXT (Japanese Ministry of Education) since 1998 has been to foster practical communication skills in Japanese high-school students by raising language teachers' awareness of more authentic communicative tasks (Kurihara & Samimy, 2007; Takanashi, 2004). MEXT has been the driving force behind overseas teacher development programs such as ours as well as numerous professional development workshops and new curricular materials in Japan.

Despite the Ministry's strong commitment, there are, as in other EFL contexts, some cultural and curricular obstacles to a more communicative approach to TEFL in Japanese high-schools. Yoshiro Takanashi of Fukuoka University notes that in terms of 'cultural constraints', there is a reluctance on the part of students to practice communication skills in English. He attributes this to Japanese communication styles, both in the classroom and in society in general. In the classroom, he says, there is a more formal communication style and a greater social distance between teachers and students than in Western classrooms, which means that it is not natural for Japanese students to participate in informal 'chat' — especially with teachers — in a classroom setting. Yet, this is exactly what CLT assumes that students will do. Further, the communication style in the culture generally focuses on "implied meaning and intuitive listening", more than on what is explicitly stated in words. (Takanashi, 2004, p. 7-9). Again, this is not the underlying assumption in CLT-based English textbooks and activities.

In addition, the context in Japan has curricular and institutional constraints. Generally, English study starts quite late, namely in junior-high, and the time allotted for English study at that level is limited; further, classes are large, averaging 35, and university entrance exams focus on grammar-translation, which conflicts with the Ministry's goal of fostering communicative skills.

To be sure, there have been some recent changes. English is now being introduced in more elementary schools; there are more native-speaker ALTs (Assistant Language Teachers) at all levels; the number of hours for English in junior-high is being increased; and in high-school, there are more compulsory writing and oral communication classes. Also, there is now some listening comprehension on university entrance exams, and some universities require a short composition (Takanashi, 2004 and information from MEXT participants).

However, a number of obstacles remain.

"Obviously, this involves a balancing act."

D. My Work in the MEXT Program

My work in the MEXT program focuses on the productive skills: speaking and writing. To do this in a context-sensitive manner, I needed to:

- Become more familiar with the teachers' cultural and institutional context.
- Help them acquire a better understanding of CLT principles and

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how these might be adapted and implemented in the classroom.

- Adapt my teaching style to suit their learning style (Bax, 1997, p. 234).

That has required time and many adjustments, as well as close collaboration with colleagues in the program. The approach I describe here, which I have used in the section of the course on 'how to teach speaking', is a result of that process of adjustment and collaboration. I will describe it in three steps.

Step 1: General Reflection on Good Speaking Activities

The participants first reflect on and write out their responses to several questions, in stages. After each stage they are invited to share their responses, sometimes with another student, at other times with the whole group. Writing out their responses first helps them to organize their ideas before speaking, something that many EFL learners prefer, and which the Japanese teachers have specifically mentioned as a more comfortable learning style for them. They say this fits with what they are used to. As Stephen Bax points out, the teacher educator should "attempt to ensure participation of [the participants] at a level and in a way appropriate to the culture and the individuals involved," not "assuming that a lot of vocal participation is invariably the best way of learning" (Bax, 1997, p. 236).

In preparing the reflection questions, I relied heavily on Penny Ur's *Course in Language Teaching* and Martin Parrott's *Tasks for Language Teachers.* I have listed the questions here in the order in which I present them in class.

a. *Recall a successful speaking activity in the classroom that you have either organized as a teacher or participated in as a student. What are the characteristics of this activity that made you judge it as successful?*
b. *What problems do you have in getting learners to speak?*
c. *What have you done or what could you do to help students overcome these problems?*

Step 2: Review and Evaluation of Sample Speaking Activities

As discussed earlier, English teaching methodologies and materials developed in England and North America cannot be used exactly as written in all EFL contexts. Were we to attempt that with teacher participants, and they with their students, the result might well be what Holliday (1992) called "tissue rejection" (as cited in Bax, 1997, p. 232). Therefore, following the reflection stage, I have the participants examine and evaluate different types of communicative speaking activities. They are free to comment on each activity and discuss how useful it would be in their own classrooms. They also spend time thinking about how they might adapt the activity for more successful use. I initially model four or five speaking activities with the participants. After each activity, I give them the following instructions:

Look at each activity and ask yourself these questions related to the classes you teach.

a. *Could this activity work?*
b. *Does it meet the criteria for success that we have*

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"...English teaching methodologies and materials developed in England and North America cannot be used exactly as written in all EFL contexts."

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agreed on? (e.g. Ur's criteria: Students talk a lot; even participation; high motivation; acceptable level of language)

c. *What specific problems can you foresee about using these activities in your class? What adaptations are necessary?*

The teacher participants often respond to the activities by saying that they are good, even great, but they also refer to obstacles, saying that they are "too long to use in my class with limited time", "my students don't have enough vocabulary for this activity", "my students would first need to write out and practice certain fixed expressions in controlled circumstances" or "I don't have enough space for students to move around like that."

However, given time to reflect, the participants often come up with good ideas for adapting the activities in order to deal with the obstacles. Many have excellent insights into their own situations. As Seidlhofer commented:

> EFL teachers who have a good idea what options are in principle available to them and have learnt to evaluate these critically... and confidently, are unlikely to be taken in [or intimidated] by the absolute claims and exaggerated promises often made by one ... linguistic theory, teaching method, or textbook. (Seidlhofer, 1999, p. 240)

I then give the participants a handout with categories and examples of more CLT speaking activities to familiarize them with more of the available options. We then try out more speaking activities in class, and again discuss and evaluate their potential for classroom use and explore possible adaptations. In this way the participants begin to develop a stronger sense of what kinds of activities might be possible and useful in their context.

Step 3. Presenting Adapted Activities: Mini-Lessons with Peers

While many of the teachers have had previous exposure to 'model' communicative speaking activities, a number of them have not really tried them in their classes, in part because the activities seemed unworkable in their original form but also because the teachers felt uncertain about their ability to carry out such activities, both for pedagogical and linguistic reasons. Now they are asked to present to their peers, in pairs, a speaking activity that they have found in a book or participated in elsewhere. Their task is to adapt it and to present it as it might be used in their own classrooms. This approach meets one of Bax's criteria for context-sensitive teacher education, in that there is an "emphasis on learners integrating new ideas into their own experience in a creative and constructive way..." (Bax, 1997, p. 235).

"...my students don't have enough vocabulary for this activity."

Having them present such a speaking activity to their peers serves, first of all, as an opportunity for the participants to actually try something new in an environment that is less stressful than a real classroom and then to receive valuable feedback and suggestions on their adaptations from their colleagues. Second, the teacher educator, while also providing some feedback, learns more about the EFL teachers' context through what they present and how they adapt the various activities. This, in turn, affects future course delivery and design. The teacher participants are then asked to write up each activity on a 2-page template for easy storage and future reference.

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E. Does Context-Sensitive TEFL Work? Feedback from Teacher Participants

At this point, the obvious question is: "OK. This sounds reasonable. But how useful and effective is it? What do the participants think? Does it help them back in their classes in Japan?" There has not yet been a formal study on the follow-through by our participants, although two related PhD theses are underway, but there has been significant informal feedback during and after each course. Also, there have been extensive comments in formal course evaluations. In general, the feedback has been positive. This has shaped the teaching and course design. Some of the anonymous evaluation comments appear below.

"Does it help them back in their classes in Japan?"

- **Feedback on the Reflection Process:** "Thanks to reflection sheets, I could understand my teaching more; It's very useful for me reflect on my teaching style; I liked to think how I can change my teaching; I appreciate that I can think, write and then talk."

- **Feedback on Sample activities:** "Many very useful activity sheets and handouts; I could learn many activities and strategies; Each class had a lot of interesting activities, and I would like to use them effectively so that students can be motivated; Actually, I didn't know many speaking activities, and never tried speaking really with my students. I have learned a lot of practical skills."

- **Feedback on Adapting Activities:** "I want to adapt activities like we talked, especially using pictures to my lessons; Sometimes these activities are difficult for my junior high school students; however, she also taught me the way how to adapt these activities for various-level students; I'd like to create these activities more effectively to adapt them to my class; All I've learned were so impressive and useful when I go back to Japan. I have to edit a little, though."

- **Feedback on Mini-Lessons:** "The workshop was most demanding and challenging, but at the same time I learned a lot; Our presentation activities have been really good for us to improve our speaking skills and understand deeply how to create and organize productive activities; I got a lot of information from... examples which my colleagues showed; During the course we found and demonstrated activities to the class. It was useful because it was like practicing in front of students; The assignments you gave us to demonstrate speaking and writing activities were also very effective. We had a few presentations for speaking activities, which gave me more confidence as an English teacher."

I have often heard from EFL teachers that the message they get from Western 'experts' at conferences or in articles on language teaching is, "You're doing it all wrong! Here is the right way to teach!" This is disempowering and counterproductive. Teachers simply go back to their classes and continue to do what they were doing before, with the additional burden of guilt and anxiety about not doing the "right" thing.

A context-sensitive approach to TEFL education makes more positive outcomes much more likely. It contributes to an understanding of more communicative ways of teaching English

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while also being more sensitive to local realities. It provides time and space for participants to reflect on how they can adapt ideas in their particular contexts, even in small ways. And it offers opportunities for teacher participants to actually try out adaptations. In these ways, a context-sensitive approach to TEFL education helps teacher participants and their students to achieve their ultimate goal: successful English language learning.

One MEXT participant wrote, after completing the course: "I didn't have confidence nor know how to teach speaking, but now I think I can teach it when going back to Japan. Thank you for your teaching." ■

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INTERNET CORNER

A baker's dozen: The best-kept secrets of 13 free ESL materials production tools

By Scott Webber and John Allan

This is an overview of what we feel are the best kept secrets for ESL materials production today. Technology in the form of software is moving forward so quickly that by the time this is read in *Contact*, the recommendations will have changed.

The 13 items highlighted here are introduced in a "Speed Geek" format. Speed Geeking is a new means of delivering conference presentations within a four-minute span. It is becoming very popular at technology fairs to allow the delegates the ability to learn surface information on many applications. The delegates can then focus their attention on the ones that appeal to them later on in the conference.

Each secret will include the following information: the software's brand name or the common trade name, the location on the internet, the resource's intended use, ESL applications and possible caveats of these digital resources.

Worldwide there is pressure on EFL and ESL teachers to create media for their students, in response to a range of factors. These forces can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Whether a teacher inherits a class of students with an unprecedented composition, a multicultural blend, a multi-level mix, or a definite linguistic target language, teachers must continually revise or create new materials to satisfy their clients' requirements.

Extrinsically, more and more language learning site managers oblige their staff to develop resources in a variety of media. The days of making a simple worksheet are over. Today the demands can range from a simple paper on reading comprehension to a full video. Within that range there are the possibilities of animations, Flash quizzes, Learning Management System interactive learning opportunities, Hot Potatoes interactive online activities, original audio recordings for class or assessments, virtual flashcards, Blogs, online journals, online wikis, multimedia presentations and, last but not least, producing digital activities for purchased CALL software.

Intrinsically, many teachers augment materials for their lessons using computers or new media to help facilitate

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"The days of making a simple worksheet are over."

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learning in their classrooms. This is a personal decision. They put the pressure on themselves to create lessons for their constituency, in response to the changing make-up of their class over the term. Teachers experiment, fail, succeed and reflect on the materials they create. Often they adapt other resources and hopefully they share resources.

Desktop computers are common in most areas of the world that can afford them. Internet access is also growing. The integration of these two technologies offers teachers the ability to exploit this phenomenon to create heightened or streamlined learning opportunities for their students and colleagues.

"Desktop computers are common in most areas of the world that can afford them."

The technologies described below are some of the resources that we have been using to create ESP materials for a diverse EFL clientele at our institution.

All of the resources described here are free. They are either downloadable from the internet or are hosted on internet sites. We have been experimenting with these and many more software and Internet resources to assist us in creating better learning opportunities for our students.

There are many more of these emerging from the Open Source movement, which believes that not only should software be free or low cost, but also that the software itself can be modified and redistributed by anyone.

We hope that you find this set of tools useful for creating media for your situation.

1 Microsoft Office Online: media resources

Microsoft Office Online is a common but unfamiliar resource to many educators is online at www.office.microsoft.com.

This Internet locale offers support for MS Office users through the Internet. The support includes templates for PowerPoint, Word, Excel, Publisher and other MS Office applications. Templates are very powerful features as they offer the teacher prefabricated documents such as newsletters for MS Publisher or forms in Excel.

In addition, Microsoft Office Online offers a wealth of clip art, and other media including audio, animation and video. Microsoft Online provides ESL materials creators with thousands of images in the form of clip art and photographs. Teachers can also use these media in paper-based formats as visual aids for their teaching sessions.

In the computer lab students can be quickly directed to insert media from this resource to Word, Excel, Publisher and PowerPoint activities.

A caveat in regard to this resource is that internet access is required. However, many of the media items are available from the Microsoft Office installation DVD. If these are not available then the IT support team for your institution or school jurisdiction should be contacted

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to include these on your computer room's installation.

2 Wikipedia: encyclopedia

At www.wikipedia.org, Wikipedia is an open-source encyclopedia available to anyone with internet access. It contains current information on virtually all imaginable topics. Open source means anyone can edit the entries.

There is also a multitude of multimedia formats on this site. For EFL/ESL instructors, a large number of activities can be created. Teachers can generate activities in which students utilize Wikipedia as a source for writing essays or producing presentations, or instructors can modify text articles to create listening or reading quizzes. Another use is that instructors can modify text articles to create listening or reading quizzes. In addition, Wikipedia has a user-built dictionary, Wiktionary, a free books library, Wikibooks and a quotes dictionary named Wikiquote.

However, some caution in using this material is advised. As Wikipedia is open to the public for editing purposes, some of the information is inaccurate or incomplete.

Project Gutenberg

3 Project Gutenberg: collection of books and audio

Project Gutenberg, online at www.gutenberg.org, was created with the intent of providing the world with a reservoir of copyright-free books. This has grown into a collection of copyright-free texts and audio books. EFL and ESL teachers can extract text from these books and volumes to use for reading or listening activities. We have found these useful in conjunction with tools such as Hot Potatoes. They can also sample audio to use for listening activities and manipulate them in audio editors such as Audacity.

The caveats for this resource are the time consumed in locating suitable content for lessons and the archaic language found in some of these books that is not appropriate for many ESL classes.

digg

4 Digg.com: current events

Digg, www.digg.com, is an all-purpose website where you can get the latest news items, videos, and photos from a variety of sources. *Digg* is a community-based initiative in which people from all over the world choose articles and link them to the *Digg* site. The popularity of an item is based on the number of votes, or Diggs, an article receives.

On the front page of the site you will see a list of the top 10 Diggs at the time you access the site. For ESL and EFL

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"As Wikipedia is open to the public...some of the information is inaccurate or incomplete."

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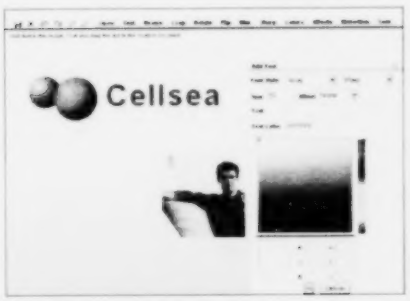
instructors, the Digg site can be a rich resource for obtaining current and sometimes off-the-wall articles to enhance classroom readings, speaking or listening activities.

Digg permits customizing of searches on genres to focus the results obtained by the instructor or the students. However, one must be careful, as at times these articles, videos, and pictures can be inappropriate or offensive.

"As in most internet resources there is one area that is offensive."



5 CellSea: image manipulation

Cellsea, at www.cellsea.com/media/vindex.htm, is an online image editor. It allows the materials designer to manipulate images before including them in ESL materials. This image management can include cropping, resizing, applying complex filters, adding text, rotating, blurring, distortion, modifying the colours and sharpening.

For instance, teachers can resize an image to fit on a worksheet that they are handing out to students. Since Microsoft Paint has too many limitations for basic image manipulation and Adobe Photoshop is too costly at the institutional level, we have experimented with many alternatives and have been pleasantly surprised by the results.

For ESL and EFL professionals, this tool is an affordable and comprehensive photograph or clip art manipulation solution. As it is internet reliant, the only caveat for this resource is that lack of, or a slow, internet connection will be a hindrance for some users.

flickr™

6 Flickr : photos and more

Flickr, found at www.flickr.com, is an online community where people share their photos with a select few or the whole internet community. It can also be used as a repository for bloggers to keep their photos.

For teachers of English as a Second/Foreign Language there are many uses. For instance, when you go looking for images or pictures of action verbs you can type in the verb in the text box and numerous pictures related to the word will appear.

Flickr also has an e-mail program which allows Flickr users to communicate with each other.

Another aspect of Flickr, alluded to above, is that there are levels of protection available if you wish to open a Flickr account to store your own pictures. These levels of protection range from completely open to everyone, open to members and non-members, or open to only invited members to your site. The main caveat of this site is appropriateness. There are some images available on this site that are not appropriate for all viewers.

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7 DaFont: fonts and icons

At times, material developers require special fonts or letter shape sets to create an impression or the illusion of an event or concept. The web resource Dafont offers a repository of optional fonts to educators at www.dafont.com.

The font categories range from Holiday to Fancy. Most personal computers have an office suite that include an overabundance of fonts. However, the font sets at Dafont provide variations that challenge the imagination. The 'Holiday' and 'Dingbat' sets allow material developers the ability to create large poster or banner visuals for their teaching areas or to insert these characters with the media they are producing for their lessons. In the ESL class they create interest, provide focus, clarification and assist in developing themes such as 'Sport' or 'Retro'.

When browsing through the Dafont visual archive it seems that any type of image or symbol desired is in silhouette form. The set up of a font set from Dafont is clearly defined on the website. Our experience has been positive with no problems with viruses. Although some of the fonts require licensing, the majority of them do not.

As in most internet resources there is one area that is offensive. However, this is primarily a production resource so the category called 'Sexy', under the Dingbat area should be avoided.

8 CNET: downloads and tutorials

Cnet.com is commonly known as the website to review electronic software and hardware. In addition, it compares their price with various vendors online. However, this site also provides free classes, free downloads and free interactive tutorials on a variety of topics. For EFL and ESL instructors who are having trouble with a particular piece of software, a proactive venture to **cnet.com** may provide a resolution to the issue or problem.

From an educational perspective there are a number of free courses and self-directed tutorials available to enhance a student's learning experience . Learners can be guided to this site to help them improve their blogs by learning how to manipulate photos, to add videos, and to create podcasts; a host of other options are also available.

One issue that will confront some instructors, especially those working in a Mac O/S (operating system) environment is that most of the free downloads and tutorials are designed for Microsoft Windows.

Collins

9 Collins: online concordancer

Collins's online concordancer, www.collins.co.uk/corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx, is a set of tools that provides data on how a word is utilized in context.

From concordanced data, instructional designers can determine how a word is used in a variety of situations, the definitions of a term, the frequency of a lexical item as well as the collocates of this word. EFL and ESL teachers can quickly use a concordancer to determine which words are appropriate for our learners. This is especially important for materials developers or teachers of ESP courses.

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"Our experience has been positive with no encounters of viruses."

Česky Deutsch English Español Français Nederlands Norsk Português Romana Turkce

fasthosts POWERED

Lorem Ipsum

"Neque porro quisquam est qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit..."
"There is no one who loves pain itself, who seeks after it and wants to have it, simply because it is pain..."

What is Lorem Ipsum?

Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text of the printing and typesetting industry. Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s, when an unknown printer took a galley of type and scrambled it to make a type specimen book. It has survived not only five centuries, but also the leap into electronic typesetting, remaining essentially unchanged. It was popularised in the 1960s with the release of Letraset sheets containing Lorem Ipsum passages, and more recently with desktop publishing software like Aldus PageMaker including versions of Lorem Ipsum.

Why do we use it?

It is a long established fact that a reader will be distracted by the readable content of a page when looking at its layout. The point of using Lorem Ipsum is that it has a more-or-less normal distribution of letters, as opposed to using 'Content here, content here', making it look like readable English. Many desktop publishing packages and web page editors now use Lorem Ipsum as their default model text, and a search for 'lorem ipsum' will uncover many web sites still in their infancy. Various versions have evolved over the years, sometimes by accident, sometimes on purpose (injected humour and the like).

Where does it come from?

Contrary to popular belief, Lorem Ipsum is not simply random text. It has roots in a piece of classical Latin literature from 45 BC, making it over 2000 years old. Richard McClintock, a Latin professor at Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia, looked up one of the more obscure Latin words, consectetur, from a Lorem Ipsum passage, and going through the cites of the word in classical literature, discovered the undoubtable source. Lorem Ipsum comes from sections 1.10.32 and 1.10.33 of "de Finibus Bonorum et Malorum" (The Extremes of Good and Evil) by Cicero, written in 45 BC. This book is a treatise on the theory of ethics, very popular during the Renaissance. The first line of Lorem Ipsum,

Where can I get some?

There are many variations of passages of Lorem Ipsum available, but the majority have suffered alteration in some form, by injected humour, or randomised words which don't look even slightly believable. If you are going to use a passage of Lorem Ipsum, you need to be sure there isn't anything embarrassing hidden in the middle of text. All the Lorem Ipsum generators on the internet tend to repeat predefined chunks as necessary, making this the first true generator on the Internet. It uses a dictionary of over 200 Latin words, combined with a handful of model sentence structures, to generate Lorem Ipsum which looks reasonable. The generated Lorem Ipsum is therefore always free from repetition,

"The British Nation Corpus may not be useful to an ESP teacher in Ontario..."

(Continued from page 21)

A concordancer can be use to isolate words in their context to identify patterns of usage for creating examples for their classes as well as making activities. The simplest form is a series of cloze activities on a worksheet or in a digital editor such as Hot Potatoes.

Concordancers can also enhance our ability to create effective vocabulary lists. There are many online concordancers available.

The main caveat for online concordancers is that the end user has little control over the corpus or the body of text that the concordance runs on. Therefore the corpus may be inappropriate for your usage. The British Nation Corpus may not be useful to an ESP teacher in Ontario, for example.

10 Lorem Ipsum: dummy text generator

Lorem Ipsum, www.lipsum.com, is a text generator for typesetting. This may not seem very important for ESL teachers, however some may be charged with larger projects such as websites or textbooks.

The text generated can be used to assist with early decisions on the production of the larger work, such as layout schemes. Since it is a print industry standard, it is a great resource and practice for materials designers to use. In layout programs such as Quark or InDesign or even Microsoft Word, this text can be created and placed in the mock-up document prior to the actual writing of a media project.

The caveat of this resource is the perception by uninformed observers that the old Latin sample 'dummy' text is unreadable, or by informed Latin readers that the text is gibberish.

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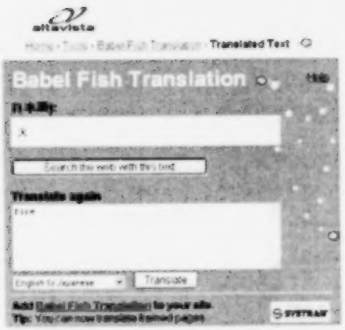

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11 BabelFish: language translating

BabelFish, babelfish.altavista.com, is an online program that translates 18 languages from and to English. One may, for example, translate English to Spanish and Spanish to English.

BabelFish is an online tool on the Altavista web site.

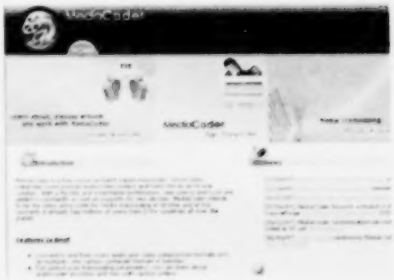
ESL and EFL instructors can use this resource for converting texts from the native culture into the target language for culturally-familiar and sensitive materials for ESL and EFL language students, particularly those at the lower levels, in helping them build their personal corpus.

This internet resource has a few caveats. Firstly, 18 languages is quite limiting. Since Arabic is not one of the languages on the translation list, we are now experimenting with the Google translator.

Another problem is the overuse of this tool by students. Like any translation tool, we want our students to become confident in understanding words in context and this tool may hinder this learning process.

Also, educators should be aware that a machine is translating at this resource — and thus may not be certain of the actual meaning intended .

This is acceptable for words or short phrases, yet for passages it is advisable to be cautious of some of the linguistic conversions provided.



12 MediaCoder: video and audio format converter

Most of us experience problems in playing audio or videos on our computers because our computer program is unable to read the file.

MediaCoder, mediacoder.sourceforge.net, is one program that solves this problem. It is a standalone program that converts a host of different audio and video formats. That is, it is able to integrate most audio and video codecs. (Codec is a compression and decompression algorithm) so it will play just about all media on your computer.

For EFL/ESL instructors this can be a vital tool, particularly when video available (downloaded or purchased on a DVD) cannot be used in the institution's CALL lab.

Software such as MediaCoder does require some knowledge of computer files and the Internet media landscape is constantly changing, so the software itself may not be capable of converting the latest file types.

(Continued on page 24)

"...it is advisable to be cautious of some of the linguistic conversions provided."

CamStudio
File Region Options Tools Effects View Help
CamStudio™
OPEN SOURCE
Ready
VOD Server Software
Download software to serve video on demand from your PC.
Stream Processing Engine
Now you can monitor, analyze and act on streaming event data
Ads by Google
CamStudio 2.5 Beta 1 Just Released. Click here to for the full story.

(Continued from page 23)

13 Camstudio: record animated sequences

Camstudio, camstudio.org, is a program that allows the user to create videos of sequential actions of activity on a desktop.

Therefore, it is an excellent means of prerecording computer tasks for future replay by either the teacher in a lecture or by students as an independent learning tool.

One practical aspect of Camstudio is its ability to capture the whole computer screen or a small segment into a digital video format which is conversant with your target audience's computer.

It also allows the option of audio narration pre-or post-video capturing. Thus, it is entirely flexible to the users' needs.

The nice aspect of this software program for EFL/ESL instructors is the diversity of uses.

It can be used to pre-record video as presented in YouTube formats or to teach inauthentic labour tasks such as getting into certain software packages.

"Software such as MediaCoder does require some knowledge of computer files..."

An issue with this software is that the file sizes created by frame-by-frame animation are quite large. If these are to be housed on a school server they may quickly occupy a large portion of the server's disk storage space.

We hope you will find this set of tools helpful for creating media useful for your teaching contexts. ■

Scott Webber, Victoria, B.C., has taught ESL in Japan and Qatar for the past nine years. His primary interests are in computer assisted language learning and language testing.

John Allan works in the Middle East in EFL educational technology. He is excited about returning to Canada later this year.

INTERNET CORNER

Online Writing Tools – a Primer

By Kathleen M. Moran

Many students — if not most — now have computers, either desktop models at home or portable laptops. They regularly surf the Internet, use cell phones, and come accessorized with other technological devices such as iPods, MP3 players, and digital cameras. They live in a mobile, miniaturized, instantaneous communicative world.

However, most educators work in traditional classroom settings where the latest technology may be ten years old or more. Increasingly, the challenge for teachers of writing becomes one of engagement with our wired students. How do we keep them interested and involved, especially in the writing classroom?

Another challenge for instructors is that we are attempting to prepare adult learners for a world that will change dramatically in the next decade and beyond. Since rapid change in technology is occurring for both educators and students alike, it seems sensible for writing instructors to try and make use of current tools for interacting and engaging with our learners.

Many of the theories and instructional approaches still in use in writing programs, however, were developed before the advent of the Internet and wired classrooms. In a traditional writing class, for example, students wrote in a somewhat artificial environment.

Topics were assigned by the instructor, the length was dictated or at least suggested, and the genre set. The writing tasks could theoretically be read by others, but in reality the teacher would often be the only one reading the work. Today, however, by using the existing technology, the 'audience' or readership for any given piece of writing is virtually limitless.

By joining the technological environment that students themselves use daily, teachers can create a more dynamic classroom environment in which students begin to write for each other as well as for their teachers. They can begin to apply the knowledge they acquire, rather than simply absorbing it for the test and then losing it.

Technological change thus allows us to reach students in ways that were not possible in the past and pre-

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"By joining the technological environment that students themselves use daily, teachers can create a more dynamic classroom environment ..."

(Continued from page 25)

sents a great opportunity to engage them.

Furthermore, we need to acknowledge that the work world that students are entering is electronically-based. Offices use e-mail rather than paper-based communication, and many corporations encourage employees to blog about their latest projects. Instant Messaging (IM-ing) is increasingly commonplace as well.

In addition, writing has become more collaborative in the workplace because technology allows people in remote locations to interact. Our students need to know how to use the tools effectively for this new world of communication. By incorporating technology into our lessons and classes we can continue to be an important part of their learning process.

There are many online tools now available for the writing classroom. But what are some of their benefits? First of all, they allow learners to collaborate. As they write, students can share information back and forth, or they can question each other.

"Students and instructors can also become collaborators during the writing process..."

Students and instructors can also become collaborators during the writing process; for example, students can contribute material and faculty can read, reflect, and comment on it. This type of encounter, during the process of composing, links an informed reader with a developing writer. And finally, students can be paired with a mentor online and can work together wherever they might happen to be — at home, in the library, in an office, in a restaurant.

For example, a student who is trying to pass a medical exam could be paired with a professional in the field and the two could work together.

By using online tools, student retention and application of new knowledge can be increased, as students now see the relevance of what they are doing in relation to the world beyond the classroom.

The following section describes a few different online writing tools and provides some links that may help those of us who are new to them get started.

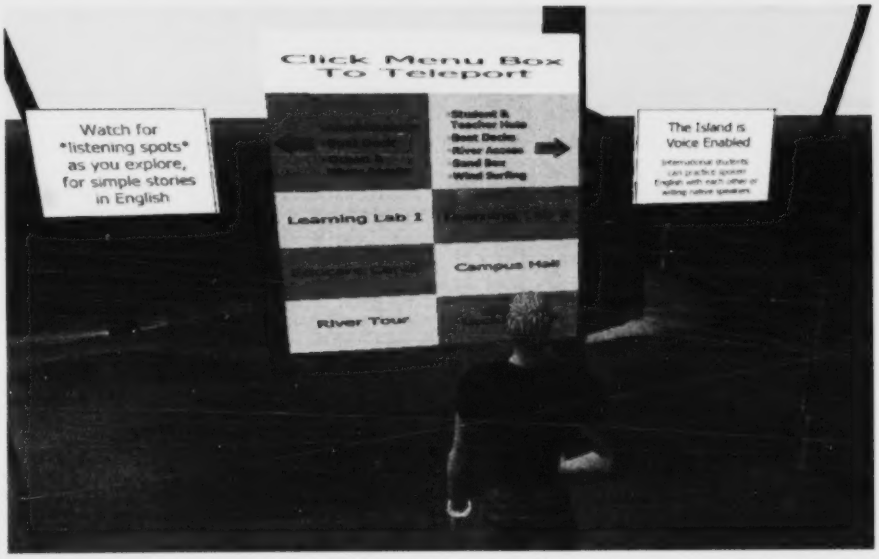
Wikis

Wikis are collaboratively-developed online communities with web pages of information on a galaxy of topics that many people can contribute to, as long as they have the required password. In some cases, no password is required, but one must be a member in order to adapt or change content. The best known of the wikis is **Wikipedia**. However, there is also **Meatball wiki** and **pbwiki**, both of which are free sites.

Many educators dislike wikis, especially Wikipedia. Why? Because anyone with a login ID can jump in and add information which may or may not be accurate and may even be untrue. However, the worst feature of a wiki might also be its best feature.

What makes this type of webpage useful is that better-informed users

(Continued on page 27)


Click Menu Box To Teleport
Watch for *listening spots* as you explore, for simple stories in English
Learning Lab 1
Campus Hall
River Tour
The Island is Voice Enabled

Virtual world Second Life has many ESL schools and self-managed ESL lessons.

(Continued from page 26)

can correct misinformation quickly. The better wikis require users to cite information that is added to the page. So, while they may not be the source of choice for essay citations, wikis can be a valuable source of current information.

Wikis can be set up in the classroom relatively easily and instructors can electronically watch what students are doing. Edits and submissions can be time stamped and the owner of the wiki can even receive notification when something is changed. This way, teachers know whether students are actively participating or not.

An example of a wiki use is the following. You may want to have students write an essay together in a small group. You can set up a page within your wiki for the group to use and assign steps you want to see performed. You can also assign timelines. Assign a topic and set a due date for the outline. Allow them to negotiate how the assignment will be completed. For example, they may decide to craft the thesis statement together and then each member of the group creates the outline for a specific paragraph. From there, the students write the paragraphs and create a coherent whole. Each student can also be responsible for editing the entire paper at least once.

This type of negotiation is done on a per group basis and the instructor may need to guide the group at first, until the students become familiar with the assignment pattern.

One advantage to wikis is that students can collaborate on their own time, from remote locations. So students who have families or who work can contribute when their schedule allows.

Also, the students are now writing for each other, not just the teacher, which creates a more dynamic environment for learning. The students are now actively using the knowledge they have.

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"...if a student inadvertently posts an answer to a question on the bulletin board, everyone else can see the answer."

Wikis	Blogs	Discussion boards	Chat rooms	Web pages	e-mail	Social networking
Create	Write	Converse	Converse	Write	Write	Post ideas
Publish	Publish	Post ideas	Respond	Comment	Respond	Respond
Comment	Comment	Respond	Engage		Engage	Converse
Converse						Share
Post ideas						Engage
Respond						Publish (?)
Share						
Edit						
Engage						

Table 1. The author compares the function and usefulness of various online environments.

(Continued from page 27)

"Web pages are increasingly popular..."

Blogs

Web logs, or blogs, are created by a person or group and information is posted (or should be posted) regularly. Discussions in a blog can range from personal opinions to research discussions. Some blog authors discuss a particular subject and other blogs are like commentaries. A blog can also be linked to other blogs or media. A blog can also contain images as well as text. Blogs are not as interactive as wikis because people can't edit what has been posted, but readers can leave comments about the posts.

Blog URLs can be shared with colleagues and students so that they can access the blogs quickly. The readers can also bookmark blogs or add them to the favourites list for easy access. If readers also sign up for updates, blogs with RSS feeds automatically send a message to the readers notifying them of a change in content.

Blogs can be used in the classroom in a number of ways. The instructor can post assignments on the blog. For example, if you have an essay assignment, you could post a news article and ask the students to read the article and then write an essay about it. If you have a reading class, again you could post a reading and ask students to comment on the reading and also comment on previous students' posts. Careful instructions need to be given, though, to ensure the students fully understand the assignment. (For example, comments such as "Yea, I agree with Sam" may not be allowed. The student would have to elaborate on Sam's post.)

Blogs can also be used as a form of journaling for the classroom. Students can set up their own blogs and provide instructors with the URLs. Then, instead of having stacks of papers to go through, one can grade online. An advantage here is that everything again is time and date stamped, so instructors know when students have done the work. Also, there is less chance of losing papers as they are being transported to and from school.

Discussion Boards/Forums

These electronic tools can be embedded in web pages or wikis. Some classroom applications such as **WebCT** also have discussion boards embedded in the platform. Discussion boards are user-generated and discussions are threaded around a common theme. One

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potential problem with these is that, if the discussion is not moderated carefully, the discussion can quickly spiral out of control. Another disadvantage is that everyone can see the posts made. So, if a student inadvertently posts an answer to a question on the bulletin board, everyone else can see the answer. Therefore, the instructor needs to carefully moderate the board.

A discussion board can be a useful tool on the other hand. Teachers can post questions about theory just explained in class, or they can post questions about readings, or they can even post take-home exam questions. Students can also post freely on the discussion board. They can ask questions about upcoming assignments, or even about due dates. They can also post materials that they are having trouble understanding and ask for feedback from classmates. In this way, discussion boards become interactive and engaging for the user. Students learn that they can collaborate and find information from more sources than just the teacher.

When creating a discussion board, it is important to remember to set up something that has controlled access. This ensures you do not have unknown users accessing the board. Also, make sure you know the users' names so that you can keep track of who is using the forum and what their contributions are.

Chat Rooms

Chat rooms are sites that can be used to hold conversations. Most sites allow the users to chat with or IM (instant message) other users who are online at the same time. Some sites also involve the use of avatars (which can be virtual people which users create to reflect either themselves, or who they would like to be). Chat rooms can be text-based so that users only type messages to each other. However, they are becoming increasingly visually-based, using webcams, avatars, etc. Some common chat sites that are visually-based are **Habbo Hotel** and **Second Life**.

The advantage to using this type of format, or even using a program such as MSN/Windows Messenger, is that students can communicate instantly with classmates, faculty, and friends and family here and abroad. Many younger people are more comfortable with this than using the phone to call and chat with friends.

For the classroom, using chat rooms can be beneficial because you can have virtual office hours for students. If you teach in a few locations, or you have students who are not able to come and see you during school hours, using IM or hosting a chat site allows students to come to you with questions when they have the time. For example, you could have virtual hours from 7-9 p.m. one night a week. Some schools and teachers are even going as far as having virtual classrooms on the site **Second Life**. It is all part of trying to be accessible for the students and helping them learn better.

"Social networking sites can be used to get to know students better."

Web Pages

Web pages are increasingly popular, as they are becoming easier to create and more free sites are becoming available. Web pages can help students because the instructors can post many different types of information on them,

(Continued on page 30)

(Continued from page 29)

such as a calendar of events. The advantage that a web page has over a wiki is that, while it can be accessed by many, the users cannot change the contents. Only the webmaster, or those few who have the access information, can change what appears to the users.

Web pages can be used in a variety of ways in the classroom. As mentioned earlier, calendars can be posted, but so can assignments. Information about the course can also be posted, such as pre-requisites or the course outline.

Web pages can also be used as an electronic bulletin board, showcasing students' work for others to see. Pictures and visuals can also be posted, making the web site a dynamic place that students may choose to visit often. Creating web pages does take time, but instructors can often find students who are willing to help with this.

"...instructors and learners need to remember that what you do online is visible to everyone, including supervisors."

E-mail

Because e-mail has become commonplace, many younger people now view this as "the older person's" way of communicating. However, e-mail can be used to send, receive, or store messages and it can be used to communicate with one individual at a time or many at once. Documents can be attached to an e-mail and shared quickly.

The ease of using e-mail, the speed of communicating, and the increasing storage capacity for documents has created an environment where many can collaborate on a written piece even if they work far from each other.

In the classroom, e-mail can be used to clarify assignment details. It can be used as a record of dialogue. It can even be used within a wired classroom between students who are working together on an assignment. The applications are limited only by the imagination of the students and instructor. Some instructors have set up virtual pen pals with students in other countries, while others link mentors with pupils. A simple internet search can yield many possibilities.

Social Networking

Finally, an area that is growing quickly is the phenomenon of social networking. Sites such as **Facebook** and **MySpace** are becoming the new way to network with friends and an easy way to stay in touch. On these sites, users can post pictures, they can inform people about what they are currently doing, and even broadcast an event and send virtual invitations. Embedded in these programs are also e-mail and messaging functions. Many young people come home, turn on the computer and instantly log in to these sites.

Social networking sites can be used to get to know students better. They can be used for virtual office hours. They can be used to network with colleagues. This is one more way to engage students and it allows students to approach instructors in a neutral environment.

One concern with all electronic media is that students tend to use "text speak" when online and they fail to use standard English. This is a great opportunity to teach students about audience and context.

As the instructor, you can negotiate the rules with the students. For example, you may allow them to use short forms when IM-ing or on a chat site, but you may require them to use full spelling and formal grammar when using e-mail. For many younger students, this is a great opportunity to learn about professional communication standards in the electronic world.

Using the tools

The following is a brief summary of how and when online writing tools can be used.

(Continued on page 31)

(Continued from page 30)

Collaborative writing:

- Students can create groups within a wiki to share information.
- Students can edit each other's work electronically on a wiki or by attaching a document to an e-mail message.
- Students can use discussion boards to post suggestions to others regarding work in progress.
- Students can confirm assignment details or discuss part of an assignment that is proving difficult in chat rooms.

Reflective writing:

- Students can read posts made by others on a discussion board and respond to those.
- Students can respond to comments made by others concerning their writing.
- Students can learn to incorporate others' ideas into their own responses.
- Students can respond to ideas or opinions posted by others

Peer Editing:

- Students can learn to comment on what others have said and do it in a constructive manner by placing their comments on a discussion board for all to see.
- Students can use e-mail to comment on each other's work, using functions such

(Continued on page 32)

RESOURCES

http://educators.pbwiki.com

- **Basic service is free.**
- **Educator homepages contain no advertising.**
- **Easy to set up (no need to know HTML).**
- **Unlimited pages.**
- **Templates are available to use.**

http://www.blogspot.com

- **Free.**
- **Easy to use.**

Books of interest:

Bruce, Bertram C., Rubin, Andee & Barnhhardt, Carol (1993). *Electronic Quills: A situated evaluation of using computers for writing in classrooms.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Collins, James L. & Sommers, Elizabeth A. eds. (1985). *Writing on-line: Using computers in the teaching of Writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann.

Handa, Carolyn. ed. (1990). *Computers and Community: teaching Composition in the twenty-first century.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann.

Miller, Susan & Knowles, Kyle. (1997). New Ways of Writing: A handbook for writing with computers. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Strickland, James. (1997) *From disk to hard copy: Teaching writing with computers.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann.

(Continued from page 30)

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(Continued from page 31)

as "track changes" on Word documents.

- Students can learn to carefully self-evaluate their own work when they know a peer will be reading it, because they themselves are performing that function more often. They learn that work is open to the public because it is online.

In closing

A few final words of caution are necessary. Both instructors and learners need to remember that what you do online is visible to everyone, including supervisors.

So, if you are posting anything, consider the audience it is intended for, but also anyone else who may be looking over your electronic shoulder. Ensure you use materials that are your originals, or else you need to credit sources appropriately.

"Students today are comfortable composing on computers..."

This aspect provides a wonderful teaching opportunity to discuss plagiarism and copyright. If you or your students are posting photographs, make sure you have express permission from the subjects. You may even need to check what the school board or institutional policies are.

As early as the 1980s scholars have encouraged the use of computers in the classroom. Books such as *Writing On-Line: Using Computers in the Teaching of Writing* edited by Collins and Sommers (1985), *From Disk to Hard Copy: Teaching Writing with Computers* by James Strickland (1997), and *Electronic Quills: A Situated Evaluation of Using Computers for Writing in Classrooms* by Bruce & Rubin (1993) advocated the use and integration of computers in the classroom.

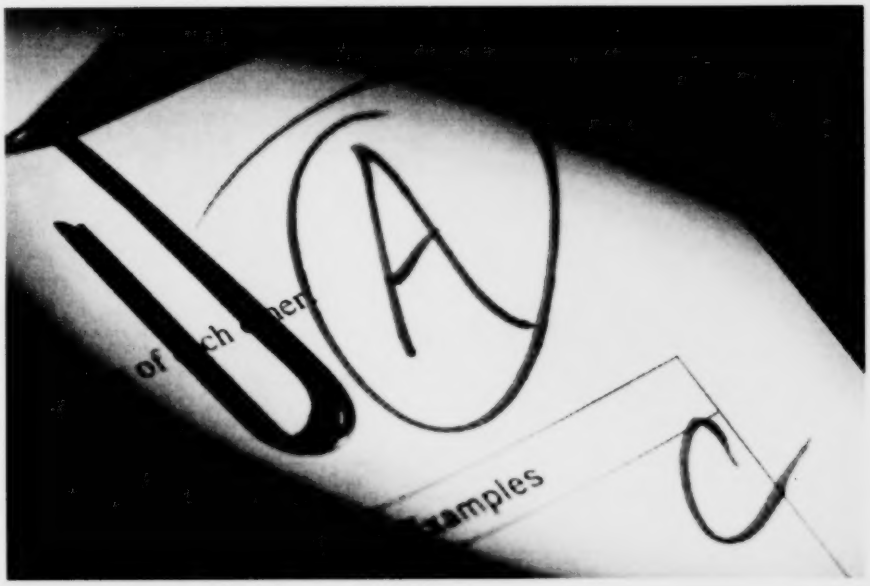
Students today are comfortable composing on computers. They are used to the technology and often feel more comfortable using it than writing with a pen and paper.

Computers and technology are part of their lives. Both are powerful tools that instructors can use to improve learning and the classroom environment. For those interested in studying this further, many books are available through online sites such as **alibris.com**. ■

Kathleen Moran has an MA in Applied Linguistics from Macquarie University and a TESL degree and Psychology degree from Brock University. She has taught at senior high schools, colleges and universities in Japan for 8 years, where she was the Prefectural representative for foreign teachers and editor of the Prefectural language teacher's newsletter. She has taught at Brock University in the Intensive English Language Program, at Humber College's Communications department, and is currently Coordinator for the Communications Department at Conestoga College.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Current Practices in Classroom-based ESL Assessment



By Lisa Kattelus

In February 2007, as an ESL Program Officer, I had the pleasure of observing an instructor develop and implement a classroom project as part of her program. I saw that this project met all the criteria of the Purposes of Assessment identified by O'Malley and Pierce in their book, *Authentic Assessment for English Language Learners: Practical Approaches for Teachers* (1996), and more.

Not only do projects allow instructors to assess specific language skills and functions and help them plan and set further directions, they also give learners immediate feedback, putting them in control of their own learning decisions. In addition, projects teach self-learning techniques, and help to develop such skills as co-operation, problem solving, decision-making, presentation skills and self-correction.

In October 2007, I profiled this project, called The ESL Café by its participants, along with its author, Ariella Tsafatinos, in a workshop (see sidebar on page 34). After reviewing feedback, I decided to expand the presentation to include other types of assessment practices, to examine other tools and strategies for assessment and explore a range of ideas for classroom projects.

Assessment Purposes and Practices

Every discussion of assessment must begin with some consideration about its purposes. Why do we carry out assessment at all? In my own thinking

(Continued on page 34)

"...projects teach self-learning techniques and help to develop such skills as co-operation, problem solving, decision-making, presentation skills and self-correction."

(Continued from page 33)

and in working with teachers, I have found it helpful to refer to the work of O'Malley and Pierce (1996) cited above, who identify six fundamental purposes for assessment:

- Screening and Identification
- Placement
- Reclassification or Exit
- Monitoring Progress
- Program Evaluation
- Accountability.

When it comes to the practical application of these purposes in the classroom we also need to consider at what stages they are most useful. Most of us would agree that assessment is useful at many points in the teaching and learning cycle; for example at an initial or diagnostic stage; at a formative stage; and in a final, summative stage.

"The summative stage is sometimes called 'getting the job done'."

I refer to the diagnostic stage as the 'getting to know you stage' — useful at the beginning of a term. The second, formative stage, is often referred to as 'getting to know you better', since it provides ongoing feedback about the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities. The summative stage is sometimes called 'getting the job done' - providing feedback at the end of a learning unit or program.

The six purposes described by O'Malley and Pierce fit nicely into this three-stage scheme as well. For example, Placement, Screening and Identification would fit at a diagnostic stage, whereas Monitoring Progress and Reclassification would fit in both the formative and summative stages.

Assessment Tools and Strategies

At the diagnostic stage, using dictations is an excellent diagnostic tool,

(Continued on page 35)

The ESL Café Project

The ESL Café project evolved from a needs assessment in which a group of adult learners expressed a goal to open a business such as a store, a boutique, or a café. The instructor suggested the idea of a café (as classroom pot lucks and food sharing were often popular events), and together they brainstormed about the logistics, costs, and risks of starting a mock business.

With the expertise of the learners (a former financial planner, a businessman, academics, a boutique owner, and homemakers), everyone began to work together on this meaningful, self-motivating learning experience, beginning with the development of a mission statement for the group:

> **"Our mission is to cultivate teamwork and multiculturalism and gain confidence in English and business skills through participation and cooperation in The ESL Café project and to fundraise for fieldtrips that will help build community and enhance our educational experience."**

A starting date was set, a location was arranged, and a market research questionnaire was developed and conducted to find out what food to serve. Participants also developed advertising through posters and flyers. Vouchers were distributed and posted, and, finally, menus and pricing were determined.

Each learner then took on a "job" for the operation of the café and wrote a job description for each position. They also did role-plays around order-taking and customer service. In addition, they prepared games and activities to reach out to and interact with potential customers.

This entire project was a highly creative process, unfolding and meeting needs as they went along. For both instructor and learners it was as 'real' as any learning experience could be.

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(Continued from page 34)

as it assesses listening, accuracy of grammar, writing (legibility, spelling, and form), and memory skills. Group activities are also useful in that they help instructors to assess speaking and pronunciation as well as turn-taking. They also build a positive atmosphere through social interaction and collaboration, which is essential for a productive learning environment.

During the formative stage, the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing can be examined against the Canadian Language Benchmarks outcomes at various levels. Speaking can be assessed in many different ways; through role-playing, presentations, social conversations and discussions, story telling, pronunciation, etc. Writing can be assessed through note-taking, letter writing, filling out forms, paragraph writing, summarizing, grammar, etc.

At the summative or final stage, instructors can examine some of the texts and materials currently available for end of term/course assessment such as *On Target; Canadian Language Benchmark Outcome Tests; SAM Volume 1 and Volume 2; Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Placement Tool Volume 1 and Volume 2.*

Project-based Assessment

Many people have found that, in carrying out summative assessments, projects are an excellent assessment tool. Not only are projects both performance-based and generated by learner needs and interests, they are very flexible and are based on real-life tasks, which can be referenced to the CLB 2000 standards and outcomes.

Aschbacher and Winters (in O'Malley and Pierce, 1996) have highlighted a number of characteristics of 'performance-based assessment' (p. 5), with useful examples :

- **Constructed response** — students construct a response, provide an expanded response, engage in a performance, or create a product.
- **Higher-order Thinking** — the student typically uses higher levels of thinking in constructing responses to open-ended questions.
- **Authenticity** — tasks are meaningful, challenging, and engaging activities that mirror good instruction or other real-world contexts where the student is expected to perform.
- **Integrative** — the tasks call for integration of language skills and, in some cases, for integration of knowledge and skills across content areas.
- **Process and Product** — procedures and strategies for deriving the correct response or for exploring multiple solutions to complex tasks are of-

(Continued on page 36)

"Many people have found that, in carrying out summative assessments, projects are an excellent assessment tool."

(Continued from page 35)

ten assessed as well as (or sometimes instead of) the product or the "correct" answer.

- **Depth versus Breadth** — performance assessments provide information in depth about a student's skills or mastery as contrasted with the breadth of coverage more typical of multiple-choice tests.
- **Student self-assessment** — promotes direct involvement in learning where students make choices, select learning activities, and plan how to use their time and resources.

An approach to assessment like the one described above provides an organized way not only of thinking about assessment but also of implementing it in the classroom. ■

Resources

SELECTED RESOURCES ON ASSESSMENT

Alderson, J. Charles. (2000). *Assessing Reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bachman, Lyle F., and A.S. Palmer. (1996). *Language Testing in Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Purpura, James E. (2005). *Assessing Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

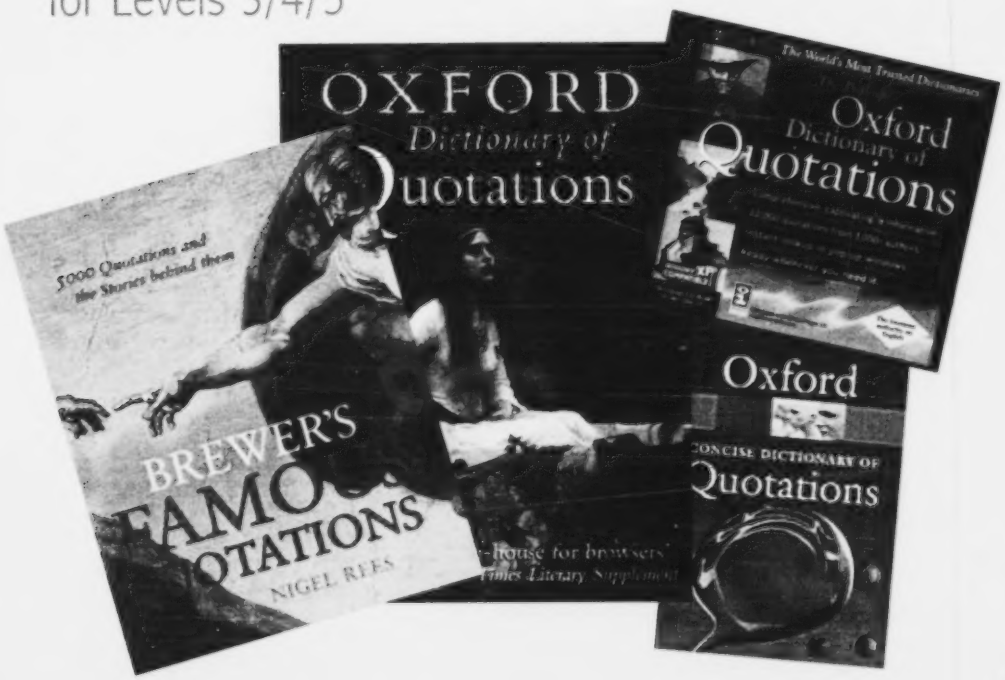
Read, John. 2000. *Assessing Vocabulary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weigle, Sara Cushing. 2004. *Assessing Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lisa Kattelus, currently an ESL Program Officer at the Toronto District School Board, has co-authored teaching guides and handbooks and written Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) curriculum guidelines and college-level syllabi. She participates regularly as a presenter and trainer in workshops and conferences, and is a qualified expert with the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Using Famous Quotations in the Classroom for Levels 3/4/5



By Judy Pollard Smith

There are some notions and classroom activities that have served me – and many of my colleagues – well over countless years in the adult ESL classroom.

One of these is that the lesson should not always be about the teacher. I know that at lower instructional levels teachers occasionally feel like song and dance artists, but by the time adult learners reach Level 3 and upwards they require something different. They need to take ownership of their learning by speaking as much as possible during their time in the classroom. The instructor's focus thus has to switch from the didactic towards classroom interactions that help learners grow towards independence, especially in their speaking ability.

If you are looking for an interesting way to generate discussion in your ESL classroom, the use of famous quotations is one technique that may help to achieve that goal.

Quotations that Work

I have found that the most effective quotations are those that express a clear opinion about a topic, have language that is memorable in some way, and reveal or comment on some universal element of the human experience. In fact, the best quotations are the ones that people can memorize.

Here are a few quotations that I have used and found effective. Keep in mind that you need to find examples that will suit your class. And if you really want to set yourself a challenge, try to find quotations from leaders of the states that

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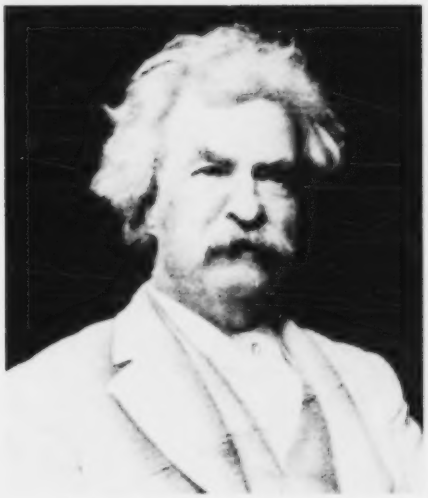
"...at lower instructional levels teachers occasionally feel like song and dance artists..."



"Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint."
Mark Twain

(Continued from page 37)

represent the home countries of your students.

"...using quotations is a good way to teach direct speech and to help learners acquire new vocabulary."

1. "His ignorance is encyclopedic" (Abba Eben)
2. "Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it." (Henry David Thoreau)
3. "It is only with the heart that one can see clearly. What is essential is invisible to the eye." (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, in *The Little Prince*)

Where to Find Quotable Quotes

You can collect good quotations from the Internet and from specialized collections in books. But in fact you can find suitable quotations almost anywhere – from TV, in popular songs, on posters, in places of worship, or from your own reading.

There is a good internet source for useful famous quotations **www.quotationspage.com**. This website and others like it arrange quotations alphabetically in themes.

If you are celebrating a special occasion in the classroom, you can find quotes to fit the theme: for example the theme of love (Valentines day) or friendship, national pride, children, books and reading, art, war, the changing seasons, the weather, Canada, language, courage, and so on.

What follows is a suggested lesson sequence that not only challenges students' thinking but will evoke responses in the form of opinions. Moreover, in line with the thinking of contemporary grammarians such as Scott Thornbury, short texts are often preferred over long ones for learning many aspects of English from the same resource material, including grammar, punctuation, collocations, idioms and so on. So, quotations seem ready-made for a host of language learning purposes.

From a language skills point of view, using quotations is a good way to teach direct speech and to help learners acquire new vocabulary. It stretches them. They feel empowered by having 'special' language in their lexicon.

I have often used famous quotations as a group-work activity with a large class. I divide the students into groups and provide one famous quotation per group. The group discusses it together, arrives at some agreed-upon meaning and then asks a representative to present it to the larger classroom group for discussion.

When I've had smaller classes, I have also used one famous quotation for the whole class to experience. The activity has always met with great success.

Try it out. ■

Judy Pollard Smith, BA, M.Sc.Ed., retired from Hamilton Wentworth District School Board, Continuing Education, Adult ESL.

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN 1

Present the following quotation, paying attention to the italicized words:

> "The reason the world is not the way it is supposed to be is because we are not the way we are supposed to be." (overheard in a sermon)

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think the quotation means?

2. Can you explain what the term "supposed to be" means?

3. Do you think the ideas in the quotation are true?

4. Many people say that an ESL classroom is a microcosm of the bigger world. Can you explain what that might mean? Do you agree with that statement or disagree?

5. What do you think the biggest problem in our world is today? (war, poverty, food shortages, pollution, political corruption, AIDS, neglect of children, depletion of oil resources, etc.)

6. Do you have ideas about how people could solve that problem?

7. What could we do in the ESL classroom every day to make it a positive experience for everybody here?

Extension ideas:

1. We often talk about Canada as a multicultural country. We say that Canada allows people to keep a lot of their old culture as they become Canadian. What do you think about that idea? Is it true? Is it a good idea?

By contrast, many say that when people immigrate to the US, they are encouraged to get rid of their old culture and become American only. They call it a 'melting pot', where all the old cultures of immigrants should melt into only one American culture. What do you think about that idea?

2. If you have a similar quote in your L1 please share it with us and explain it.

Let the students be the leaders here; it is the expression of their opinions, and not the teacher's that is important. Remember, however, that they first need to understand the quotation, then have time to form their own responses to it, and finally express those responses in English.

Teachers can provide assistance with word meanings, shades of meaning, spelling and syntax, but most, if not all, of the speaking should come from the students

Follow-up Activities

It is important to design some sort of follow-up or application activity for each quotation to help the learners develop a range of language skills in addition to speaking.

Sample Lesson Plan 2

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN 2

"One sees clearly only with the heart; essential things are invisible to the eye."

I like using the quote cited above from *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry because I believe it expresses a universal concept.

The way you use this quote will of course depend on the education level and background of your students. Let us assume here that the ESL class is a high Level 3 and over, and that the educational level of the students is mid-high school completion.

The lesson concepts expanded below reveal how to teach many aspects of language in context.

1. Introduce the idea of what constitutes a quote or quotation, (i.e. 'Something that somebody has said that teaches us.') This may also be a good time to teach direct and indirect quotes.

2. Have the quote pre-written on the whiteboard or on chart paper in large dark lettering. Include the quote marks. Teach about the use of quote marks. Teach about the use of semi-colons.

3. Does anyone in this class speak or understand French? Explain that the original book was written and published in the French language.

4. Has anyone heard of this writer before – Saint-Exupéry? Of this book – *The Little Prince*? (Try to have a copy on hand.)

5. New vocabulary: *clearly, essential, invisible.* Can you tell me something that is invisible, something that is clear, something that is essential?

6. Think about the quote for a minute. How does it sound when you say it in your first language?

7. Write the quotation on the board using your first language. Speak it aloud to the class in your first language, in turns, so we can hear how it sounds. (I believe that this process of 'talking it out' in L1 helps the student to understand the meaning more deeply in English.)

8. Show us the adverbs, the nouns, the articles of speech.

9. What does the pronoun 'one' mean in this quote?

10. What can you see with your eyes?

11. What can you see with your heart?

12. What do you think this quote means?

13. Can you give an example from your life of how you see with your heart?

14. Is there a similar quote in your L1?

15. Write your own quote. It doesn't have to be in perfect English. Put your ideas about something that is important to you into a phrase and we'll work it out on the board together, taking turns.

The Impact of Foundational Methodologies In Second Language Education

By Karen Thomson

I will be the first to admit that I did not think about teaching ESL as a career when I first began. (This is a bit of an embarrassing admission coming from the President of TESL Toronto.) I fell into the English as a Second Language teaching profession because it seemed to be a good way to fund my obsession with traveling. The TESL course I took did not have a strong focus on foundational theory or research, and that was fine as far as I was concerned. To be honest, I didn't pay much attention in the one class devoted to the history of the profession. My goal was to learn how to teach, how to *do* it, not learn what methods had been tried and discarded in the decades before I began teaching. So, although I have now been teaching ESL for many years, take it seriously and consider it to be my profession, it was not until I started teaching teachers that I began to consider the foundations of my profession and how these foundations have had an impact on my daily teaching practice; and it was not until this time that I stopped to wonder about the origins of some of the techniques I employ on a daily basis, the people who developed these techniques, and the theories upon which are they based.

Examining the main methodologies used in second language teaching has made me realize that my best practices are those that have been developed through trial and error over the past 100 years. Not every aspect of each methodology is useful, but those methods that I so quickly discarded many years ago contain foundational techniques that are essential to my teaching practice today.

In this paper I will briefly explain the history, the strengths and weaknesses of some of the major second language methodologies. and examine their impact on my current teaching practice and, perhaps by extension, the teaching practice of other second language educators.

From The Classical Method to Grammar Translation

The study of how people learn a second language (L2) is a fairly new subject, having only been systematically pursued since the last half of the twentieth century. In the intervening years there have been many attempts to find a method of teaching that would maximize student learning. The Grammar Translation Method originated from the Classical Method, which was used for centuries for the teaching of classical European languages, Greek and Latin. These 'classic' languages were taught not for communication purposes, but in order to improve the intellectual capacity of the student. Classical methodologists believed that by reading classical texts and becoming familiar with the grammar and vocabulary of a second language the student would become a better reader and writer of their first language (L1) and would grow intellectually.

The Grammar Translation method, developed from these historical roots, and was favoured by most language teachers until the middle of the 20th century (Richards and Rodgers, 1994). In its strictest form, this method involves translating sentences back and forth between the L1 and the L2. It also requires learners to master the grammar of the L2 and to memorize extensive vocabulary lists, but has little to do with the principles of speaking or listening (Brown, 2000). This method is still used today, predominantly among non-native speaking teachers of a foreign language

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"...it was not until I started teaching teachers that I began to consider the foundations of my profession."

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(e.g., native Spanish speakers teaching Spanish in Canada, or Japanese speakers teaching English in Japan) because the language the students speak is a common one; therefore, explanations can be given in the mother tongue. Interestingly, the Grammar Translation Method does not continue to be popular because it is a well-researched and effective method of instruction; it continues to exist because it is the way that most teachers have been themselves taught. Alfred Smith (2000) reflects on this practice in his essay, *Four Decades of Bonjour: The Story of One Teacher's Practice*:

> With a textbook full of rules, sentences to translate, lists of vocabulary words, and readings for further translation practice, I made my way tediously from chapter to chapter. It never occurred to me to question what I was doing because I did not know what else to do. This is how my teachers had taught me, so I thought I was just 'teaching French.' (p. 24)

"Because of my negative experiences with this method in the past, I quickly discarded it..."

The Grammar Translation Method began to decline in the mid-20th century because more and more teachers began to shift their focus away from grammar proficiency and towards oral proficiency. Later in his essay Smith points out that, even with a degree in the subject, he was not fluent in French and that fluency came only with studying and living in France (p. 24).

With the increasing importance of being able to communicate in an additional language, the fact that the Grammar Translation method's inefficiency did not produce speakers contributed greatly to its the decrease in its popularity and the rise of other language teaching methods more focused on communication skills.

As a TESL student, I learned about the Grammar Translation method and thought ruefully about my French classes in elementary and junior high school where I spent hours conjugating verbs and writing presentations in English and then translating them into French. I also recalled an excruciating experience during a school trip to Quebec, when I was paralyzed when someone spoke to me in French; I could neither understand nor respond to French outside the classroom. Because of my negative experiences with this method in the past, I quickly discarded it and went in search of another.

Upon reflection, however, I realize that the Grammar Translation Method has probably influenced my teaching more than any other method. From it I have learned why some of my students see my classroom techniques as "too much fun" and sometimes feel that they are not learning. Because they have also come from classes organized by the Grammar Translation class method, such activities as talking, creating dialogues and going on field trips all seem somewhat frivolous pursuits. Recognizing this background, it is now clearer to me how important it is to help guide them to more clearly see the value in these 'active' language-learning experiences. Before they can adapt to their new learning environment, however, they need to clearly understand the pay-off in terms of the quantity, the quality and the rate of their language learning, so that they will feel more comfortable in this new learning environment.

The other element in my teaching that I have taken from the Grammar Translation Method and the Classical Method is the importance of choosing my teaching techniques based on the goals of my students. The Grammar Translation Method is not a "bad" method of language learning; it failed to produce flu-

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ent speakers because that is not what it was originally intended to do. It was based on techniques designed to create scholars with a thorough understanding of a language, not fluent speakers of the L2. By examining the Grammar Translation Method, I have come to realize that knowing my students and their goals and choosing teaching techniques that are designed to help them achieve these goals are two essential elements that contribute to my success in the classroom.

The Audio-lingual Method — the 50s and 60s

In the late 50s, the pendulum swung from the Grammar Translation method and its translation of words and phrases to the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM). This method, which began as the so-called 'Army Method', was developed in the U.S. during World War II because of the increased need for unilingual Americans to become orally proficient in other languages. Therefore, the focus of the ALM was on oral skills and very little attention was paid to grammar rules (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). This method was rooted in behaviourist psychology and structural linguistics. From the behaviourist theories of operant conditioning came the idea that languages were learned by the formation of mechanical habits and that conditioning could be used to reinforce these habits. According to this theory, students say something which is then reinforced by a response utterance (stimulus-response conditioning) and the ensuing repetition leads to habit formation (see Quirke, Phil's EFL Support Site — for English Language Teachers studying for Masters or Diplomas).

From linguistics came the idea that language could be broken down into lists of structural patterns, and with the learning of these patterns would come the learning of a second language. In audio-lingual instructional practice, teachers act out dialogues or phrases, and students then repeat these orally until a habit is established. Vocabulary is presented in context only and repeated until remembered. Grammar is not taught directly; students are expected to learn the grammar rules by repeated exposure to examples in context. In theory, these habits and grammar rules will generalize and students will be able to use them in other language situations. (Second Language Acquisition Methods website)

Unfortunately, although the ALM was incredibly popular at the time, it was not long before teachers began to notice that they were not producing students fluent in their L2. In addition, many students did not like constantly repeating phrases without any creative input or variety, nor did they produce a great deal of generalized use of phrases or words. The phrases and words could be parroted back in context, but not used in other situations. This can be compared to many Canadian students of my generation who can sing *O Canada* in French without having any idea what we are saying or where one word begins and the next one ends.

"To me, this 'repeat after me' method of teaching was too simplistic..."

After learning about the ALM, I discarded it completely. To me, this "repeat after me" method of teaching was too simplistic, and I did not think much about this method again until I began this research. Interestingly, now that I have spent time reviewing sample ALM lessons, I have realized that although I could never be an ALM purist, I do incorporate several audio-lingual techniques in my teaching practice, most notably mimicry and repetition, which are very useful when teaching pronunciation. Just as one trip to the gym will not turn you into an Olympic medalist, neither will one or two repetitions of a problematic sound fix your pronunciation difficulties; it often takes dozens of repetitions before

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a non-native speaker will hear a new phoneme clearly, and many more repetitions after that in order to produce the sound with native-like precision even once. Also, repetition and memorization are important because many phrases must be learnt by rote by the beginner language learner.

If I were to teach my Level 1 class the rules of present perfect tense when I teach the question, "How long have you lived in Canada?" I'm sure my students would give up on English because of the complexity of this grammar point. Nevertheless, this 'question and response' pattern is very useful for students at the lower levels; consequently, memorizing these phrases as units instead of trying to understand each word is essential. When they have this short question/answer formula memorized, they feel more confident to strike up a conversation with someone they meet.

"at the lower levels... memorizing these phrases as units instead of trying to understand each word is essential."

Finally, I have found that memorizing common phrases is a simple way for my students to "buy time" in conversations or interviews. If the phrases, "That's a really good question. Let me think about that," can be spoken without any conscious effort, the brain is left free in the interim to prepare the answer to the interviewer's question. So upon reflection, I found that a great deal of my day-to-day teaching is rooted in the audio-lingual techniques of repetition and habit formation. By taking the most useful ALM techniques and examining the reasoning upon which these are based instead of automatically discarding this method, I have been able to learn a great deal about why certain elements of my teaching practice are effective.

When used thoughtfully and in moderation, these techniques can be extremely effective and enjoyable classroom tools.

The Designer Methods - the 70s and 80s

The 1970s saw the emergence of a series of methods collectively known as the "Designer" methods, and individually known as Community Language Learning, Suggestopedia, The Silent Way and Total Physical Response. These methods were based on two important developments: Chomsky's work in linguistics that drew attention to the "deep structure" of language, and the work of psychologists who had begun to recognize the importance of the interpersonal and affective aspects of language teaching and learning (Brown, 2000). Developed by Charles Curran in 1972, the theory of Community Language Learning (CLL) was that the best language learning would occur in a classroom in which the traditional roles of student and teacher were replaced by a counselor-client relationship (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Curran suggested that this relationship would create an atmosphere that would encourage learning, and if the client were to try to learn a second language in this context free of environmental or personal problems and challenges, he or she would learn without "really trying." (Taber, blog, 2008)

Suggestopedia, developed by Georgi Lozanov in 1979, attempted to capitalize on the mind's power to retain information when it is in a relaxed and open state (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Lozanov believed that by breaking down the psychological barriers to learning, such as fear of failure, learning will happen very quickly. One way to break down these barriers was to listen to music and to learn in a relaxed and comforting environment, so the teacher should bring a variety of music and remind students repeatedly that the activities are easy.

Caleb Gattegno's *The Silent Way* is characterized by discovery learning.

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He believed that by being as silent as possible and avoiding explanations, the teacher would encourage students to discover their second language rather than memorize or learn it (Eisenstein, 1987). Finally, James Asher's Total Physical Response (TPR), developed in 1977, was based on his realization that children listen a great deal before ever speaking a language, and that what they are listening to is accompanied by physical gestures. Therefore, students learning a second language may learn more effectively if they are exposed to language in a setting with similar elements (Brown, 2000). In a TPR classroom, the focus is on listening comprehension, and the learners do not have to do anything other than merely respond to commands paired with gestures. When students feel ready, they are free to begin making commands and asking questions by mimicking the teacher (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

Reading descriptions of these Designer methods during my TESL training course caused me to shake my head, wonder what they were smoking in the 60s and move on immediately. Part of my difficulty with them was that they seemed to be "all-or-nothing" solutions; the teacher had to completely change his or her teaching style, as well as everything in the physical environment of the classroom in order to adhere to the tenets of the methodology. For Suggestopedia, you had to fill your classroom with props and have a complete classical music collection at the ready. For the Silent Way, you had to invest in specially designed charts, blocks and rods and use nothing but this equipment. I felt, perhaps because of the way in which these were presented to me at the time, that I either completely submitted to that particular methodology or discarded it totally. In addition, these Designer methods had always seemed to me to be appropriate only in the most limited situations; TPR and the Silent Way would be useful for complete beginner classes, for example. Other than these specialized situations, I could see no realistic use for these methods. But when I explored them more deeply, I found that each method has at its core characteristics that I believe to be essential elements of an effective language classroom. These were very clearly outlined by Chastain (1976) in *Developing Second-Language Skills: Theory to Practice*. He states that from these cognitive methods, language teachers should learn to build on what the students already know, relate what is being learned to what the student already knows, use inductive or deductive learning procedures as appropriate to the situation, and finally focus on the functional use of grammar.

Although I had never seen the connection between these foundational principles and the Designer methods, these ideas resonate greatly with my own classroom experiences. Language learners do not come to my class as blank slates. They are adults with a great deal of background knowledge and a wealth of experiences. I have always found that if I can build on these experiences and relate what I am teaching them to what they already know, they will retain new information more easily. In addition, if I allow my students to discover the language rules on their own, they remember these rules more easily, and if they can see the usefulness or functionality of what they are learning, then they will be more focused and interested.

Although Chastian's list is extensive, I would like to add one more element of these Designer methods that I see in my teaching practice. I believe that creating a classroom atmosphere that breaks down all psychological barriers to learning is essential. When my students are relaxed, not only is the class more enjoyable for everyone, but I also find that the students learn more quickly and easily. Students who fear making mistakes will never be fully comfortable using their L2, and if they do not feel

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"Designer methods had always seemed to me to be appropriate only in the most limited situations..."

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comfortable, they will never become fluent. By encouraging my students to act out dramas, watch movies and have fun with the language, and by bringing props, music and games into the classroom, I hope that I am creating an atmosphere similar to that envisioned by the Designer methodologists in which the psychological impediments to learning are reduced and students are free to enjoy learning a new language.

The Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Learning – the 90s

The final methodology of language teaching I would like to examine was the "flavour of the decade for the 90s" (Taber, 2008) It is, in fact, not characterized as a method at all, but is instead an approach toward language learning and is thus called the Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching. The philosophy of Communicative Language Teaching is that teachers do not teach *about* language, but instead they teach language. This becomes apparent in its emphasis on functions that are necessary for communication, such as giving directions or telling time. Teachers using this approach believe that structures and vocabulary are important, but that if only these are taught, students will know the rules of language usage without being able to actually use the language (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Adherents of the Communicative Approach focus their attention on the idea of communicative competence instead of mere grammatical or linguistic competence. In order to help the learners achieve this competence, teachers seek to engage students with techniques and in situations that are pragmatic, authentic, functional and meaningful. Students are required to actually use the language in these situations because using the language, productively and receptively, is the true test of communicative competence (Brown, 2000). Ideally, grammar is not presented at all; teachers present the target language by showing or using it in context; they give students time to practice this language in structured activities in the class; then finally they guide them into using the language independently.

When I studied CLT during my teacher training course, I felt that I had found a method that was a 'one-size-fits-all' solution. I knew that most of my students would be studying English in order to learn to communicate in English, whether it be for travel, business or educational purposes. How better to help them feel comfortable than by encouraging them to actually communicate in the class? I reflected on my own experiences of studying French through vocabulary lists and verb conjugations and then being unable to communicate. CLT methods would surely eliminate this type of problem, and in addition, it would eliminate any difficulty I might have because I hadn't learned any grammar in school. In fact, CLT was indeed seen to be a heaven-sent panacea by many teachers for just the reasons I mentioned; it focused on communication as the goal and reduced or eliminated the need for a great deal of grammar study. (Taber, 2008).

"As time has passed, I have realized, as have many other teachers, that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' answer."

As time has passed, I have realized, as have many other teachers, that there is no "one-size-fits-all" answer. In its purest form, CLT lacks the structure that a classroom needs; it does not address the needs of students studying English for employment, business or academic purposes, and therefore need to be accurate, not just fluent; it does not address the diverse backgrounds of my students who like to learn about the grammar; and it does not take into account the recent research done on error correction and learning styles in adult learners. Although I still wholeheartedly agree with a great deal of what is pro-

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posed by the Communicative Approach, I can see that it is not a panacea. Certainly, if students wish to become communicators of a language, they must be given opportunities to practice the language in classroom situations that are as close as possible to the situations in which they will be speaking the language in the "real world", but communicative activities alone are not sufficient.

Although a great deal of my teaching is based on the ideas put forth by CLT, I have realized that it is the basis of only a portion of my teaching practice, not all of it. My eclectic method owes a great deal to the foundational methodologies that were the 'flavours' of other decades. These methods have a great deal to teach new and experienced teachers alike. By examining what worked and what didn't work in these methodologies and thinking about why these techniques were or were not effective, we can learn from those who came before us, those who were the innovators, who tested theories, and who made mistakes. Through examining and learning from the foundations of second language education, we can continue to improve as educators in this fledgling field. ■

Karen Thomson is currently on leave from the University of Toronto's English Language Program as she completes a Master of Teaching degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. A Teacher Educator at the Canadian Cooperative for Language and Cultural Studies (CCLCS), she is President of the Toronto affiliate of TESL Ontario and a frequent presenter at TESL Ontario and other affiliates. Her interests include teacher education, materials development, integrating technology and teaching, and exploring the positive impact of humour in teaching.

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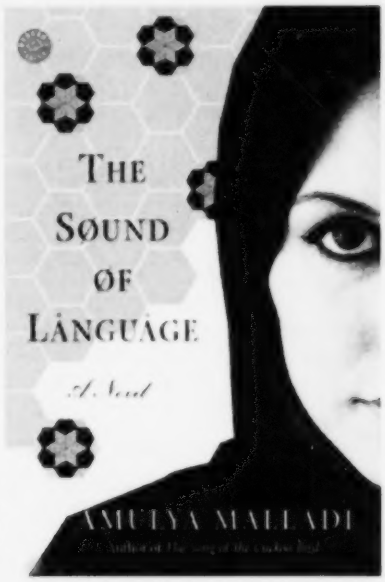
BOOK REVIEW

The Sound of Language

by Amulya Malladi



The Sound of Language by Amulya Malladi (2007). New York: Random House Publishing. 256 pages. ISBN 0345483162 (includes interview with the author).

Amulya Malladi has a bachelor's degree in engineering and a master's degree in journalism. Born and raised in India, she lived in the United States for several years before moving to Denmark, where she now lives on the island of Mors with her husband and young son. You can contact her at www.amulyamalladi.com

Review by Robert Courchêne

"Since his wife's death, Gunnar has wallowed in self-pity and remorse..."

In this beautifully crafted story two characters confront the ache of deep personal loss to form a unique friendship that enables them to surmount social prejudices, intense loneliness and heartbreak.

Raihana, an Afghan widow, has been taken in by her relatives in Denmark and, like all immigrants, is required to take language courses, one part of which is a *praktik*. Struggling with Danish, she likens its sounds to the *buzz buzz* of bees — hence the title of the book.

For the *praktik*, Christine, her perceptive language teacher, proposes that Raihana team up with Gunnar, a man in his sixties who has been recently widowed. Since his wife Anna's death, Gunnar has wallowed in self-pity and remorse, isolating himself from his family and friends, constantly drinking, refusing to clean up either his house or himself and vegetating before the TV. Her death has destroyed his desire to live.

Gunnar reluctantly allows Raihana to stay for a week, without being in any way committed to help her learn Danish. Their relationship is strained, not only because they have little to share through language but because Gunnar is not open to the risk of undertaking any new relationship, let alone one with an Afghan refugee woman.

The story opens just prior to the arrival of spring. Gunnar and Anna have taken up beekeeping, both tending their own hives. Gunnar should be taking care of all the hives but he has lost interest, though he knows the bees will die if not attended to.

Raihana begins her sojourn by regularly cleaning the kitchen and living room, and over time she and Gunnar begin to talk about their shared involvement in the tasks of beekeeping. As the story develops, Gunnar begins to apply himself to his tasks and together they end up producing a bumper crop of honey. So engaging has the experience been for her, that by the end of the novel Raihana expresses a sincere desire to take this up as her chosen trade.

Throughout the novel both Raihana and Gunnar suffer the taunts and ostracism of their respective families and communities. Raihana's host families and the Afghan community are scandalized

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Other books by Amulya Malladi

I strongly recommend the other novels written my Malladi; each deals with an aspect of conflict between different ethic groups, the class of cultures, religions and generations. In each she draws on her experience of living in India, the US and in Denmark. All are engaging reads that not only bring pleasure but reveal insights into the human experience.

Song of the Cuckoo Bird: a Novel. Random House Publishing Group (2005)

Serving Crazy with Curry. Ballantine Bocks October 26, 2004

The Mango Season. Random House Publishing Group (2004)

A Breath of Fresh Air. Random House Publishing Group (2003)

(Continued from page 48)

that a young widow who refuses to wear either the hijab or the burka would be working alone with an older man, especially one from another culture. They see her as an insult to their community and culture.

On the Dane's side, some — though not all — of Gunnar's relatives condemn his working with an immigrant, let alone a woman, as highly inappropriate even as they acknowledge that the reason for Raihana's presence there is to help her integration into Danish society. They view immigrants as both unnecessary and unwanted presences in their country.

Adding dramatic tension to the novel is Gunnar's grandson who has shaved his head, sports a swastika tattoo and joined the neo-Nazi movement. He sees the likes of Raihana as a curse; through his own and his friends' actions he provokes a family crisis.

Raihana's confusion grows, as she discovers that by escaping from her home country she has not put racism and gender discrimination behind her, but instead finds herself confronted anew by the same issues in Denmark. A racial confrontation that nearly destroys her family finally brings together many Danes from the little village, and with Gunnar's intervention, the villagers come together to help Raihana and her relatives rebuild their lives.

Through the interactions of Raihana, Gunnar and their families, author Amulya Malladi reveals the difficulties faced by immigrants as they try to surmount the barriers to a successful integration in their newfound, but often not freely-chosen, home. While language is certainly an important element in their social estrangement it is not the only one. Ethnic and religious background, cultural patterns and practices, gender roles — including access to education — and attitudes of the host culture to immigrants in general are all potent factors that either facilitate or militate against integration.

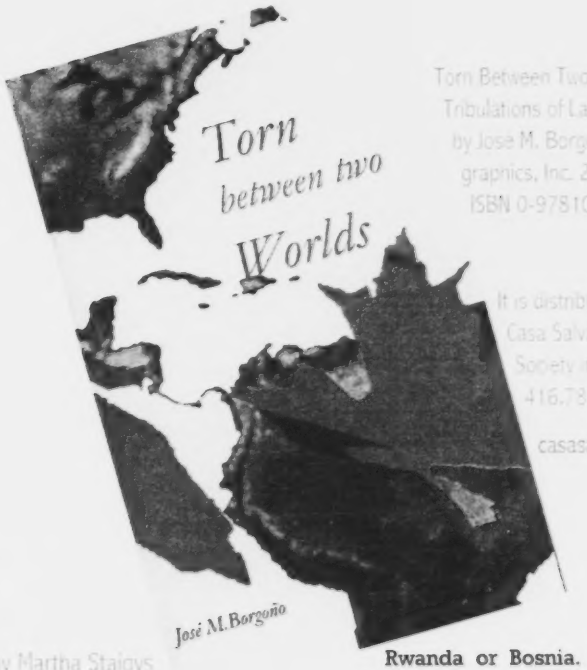
The Sound of Language explores the deep divide that confronts all immigrants as they struggle to survive in an alien cultural milieu. Ultimately, it is through courage and understanding that people from widely different backgrounds and languages can come to understand, to accept, and perhaps even to love one another. ■

Robert Courchêne is a Professor at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) at the University of Ottawa. His teaching and research interests include culture/multiculturalism, testing, curriculum design and teacher training. He has been a regular contributor to *Contact* for over 25 years.

"...Amulya Malladi reveals the difficulties faced by immigrants as they try to surmount the barriers to a successful integration in their newfound, but often not freely-chosen, home."

BOOK REVIEW:

Torn Between Two Worlds:
Trials and Tribulations of Latin American Exiles
By José M. Borgoño



Torn Between Two Worlds:Trials and Tribulations of Latin American Exiles by José M. Borgoño. MGI michael graphics, Inc. 290 pages softcover. ISBN 0-9781041-0-2.

It is distributed in Canada by Casa Salvador Allende Cultural Society in Toronto. Phone: 416.781.5138.

casasalvadorallende.com

Review by Martha Staigys

"How often have we shared their personal tales of terror, flight, hunger, even torture?"

Every day the news brings us shocking reports from faraway places, accompanied by unsettling images of people – often children – peering into photojournalists' cameras with dazed, haunted eyes.

The reports document the tragedy of human lives torn asunder by calamities of nature, but often by a more disturbing and virulent force - the human kind.

Over supper hour we become silent and distant witnesses to the operations of political regimes with little regard for personal liberties or the human spirit. Today it happens to be Zimbabwe, yesterday it was Myanmar or Rwanda or Bosnia. Where will it be tomorrow?

The gruesome media coverage is made personal for ESL teachers, however, because it reveals the real lived experience of many of our own students, their family members, friends, or neighbours. How often have we shared their personal tales of terror, flight, hunger, even torture? And how often have we as teachers been humbled by their resilience and the calm manner in which they relate their life stories? Their fortitude belies their painful odysseys.

Ironically, one's own geographical knowledge broadens as each tragedy becomes a newspaper headline, but it is the personal disclosures of those

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whom we teach which tears at our hearts.

Personally, I recall Go Go, a woman whose brilliant smile and spirit showed no trace of the hell she had witnessed and experienced in Rwanda; she is now living a new life in Vancouver.

The horror of the 1994 genocide in that country is by now well known to Canadians, through books and film documentaries, graphically detailing the horrifying experiences of Canadian General Romeo Dallaire.

I admire another of my students, Kabir, an engineer from Afghanistan, determined to come to class while battling serious medical issues and reliving the haunting memories of months spent in hiding underground with his wife and young daughters. He comes to school every day with grace, a sense of humour and a new idiom or expression he just recently learned in class. He is his daughter's hero, and has become one of mine.

And I share my own father's gratitude to Canada for offering refuge to my displaced family many years ago, ensuring that I would not have to endure his past.

Fortunately there are happier, more positive, chapters in this saga of human struggle. In the words of Uruguayan psychoanalyst Edmundo Gomez-Mango, the lucky survivors of such horrors sometimes have a chance to "reinvent themselves" and rise like a phoenix out of the ashes. They often find their way to a new country as they continue their own re-invention, but this time through a new language.

So it is with immigrant newcomers; their arrival in Canada creates a new reality in which they often feel "torn between two worlds". It is appropriate, then, that a recent book which chronicles the struggles of people fleeing persecution in Latin America should bear those words as its title.

Worldwide today there are close to 9.9 million refugees, about 741,000 asylum seekers and nearly 1.3 million internally-displaced people, mostly the victims of conflict and human rights abuse.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the number of refuges is around 41,000, while there are about 17,000 asylum seekers and close to 3 million internally-displaced individuals.

UN High Commission for Refugees, June 2007

Torn Between Two Worlds, by Toronto teacher and public administrator José M. Borgoño is written from the perspective of Latin Americans; however, the parallels with other violent parts of the world are all too real.

In this new edition (2008) of his book, Borgoño has interwoven a collection of personal stories with detailed information on the origins, processes and socio-political dimensions of personal upheaval that lead to exile.

The author, a survivor of political repression, was forced to flee his native Chile following the 1973 military coup that saw the violent overthrow of democratically-elected president Salvador Allende by right-wing General Gustavo Pinochet.

The stories in this 288-page softcover book document the tribulations, challenges, discoveries, and adaptation processes of those who have had to live a part or all of their lives in exile. The work is informed by Borgoño's own personal and work experience with immi-

(Continued on page 52)

"Fortunately there are happier, more positive, chapters in this saga of human struggle."

Guatemalan refugee camp at Acul, 1983. (Photo: Marcelo Montecino as posted on flickr.com)

"His dangerous trek, much of it on foot, continued to Fort Erie, where he sought asylum in 1989."

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grants, accumulated over more than three decades of living in Canada.

Torn Between Two Worlds chronicles the adaptation problems facing refugees, but also reminds us that their struggles are also faced by newcomers who enter Canada through peaceful channels.

The book begins with a historical overview of repression in Latin America, where the struggle for economic, political and personal freedoms continues even today. The dates and places footnote a disturbing litany of human rights violations.

Borgoño notes that large-scale Latin American migration is a recent phenomenon. Canada's geographical location and harsh weather conditions, and Latin Americans' scant knowledge of the people and culture disheartened many would-be migrants and refugees. But this situation began to change in the 90s, in part due to new immigration policies and when "victims of persecution down south realized that the Canadian refugee system was not as harsh as the American one."

In an early chapter we meet 22-year-old Marco Aurelio of El Salvador, abducted in March 1988 from his family farm by guerilla forces opposed to the government. Suspected of being a member of the *Frente Marti de Liberacion Nacional* (FMLN), he was forced into a guerrilla camp. Initially terrified to attempt escape, he seized an opportunity nine months later. After walking for eight hours, he landed on his aunt's doorstep where he was fed and given provisions to aid his escape out of the country. Heading north, he illegally entered Guatemala, again on foot.

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Checklist for Refugees

- Financial resources
- Valid travel documents, e.g. passports and visas
- Distance from border
- Geography of national boundary area
- Presence of border police controls
- "Fees" demanded by refugee smugglers
- Contacts within government agencies
- Age, health and strength

José M. Borgoño

(Continued from page 52)

Aided by a truck driver, he then crossed illegally into Mexico and worked in Monterrey before arriving in Texas. His dangerous trek, much of it on foot, continued to Fort Erie, where he sought asylum in 1989. Eventually he arrived in Toronto – a testament to human endurance!

Throughout *Torn Between Two Worlds*, the personal anecdotes and diary entries of the subjects are printed in a special typeface, and are thus easy to locate. They are short, clearly told, and true to the experiences of many students in our adult classes. The book is subdivided into seven sections, each of which is flagged by a colour photo on a divider page. Though the chapters are not numbered, the Table of Contents provides sub-headings and page numbers.

Borgoño describes the many escape routes that refugees have used in their quest for liberty - by air, land or sea. Some refugees in their desperation have been stowaways, surviving harrowing trips on aircraft. Many have been aided by outside groups - public, private or international aid organizations. Others have been secreted in "safe houses" – a reminder of the historic role of Canada's 'Underground Railway' - as they crossed the United States and claimed asylum at Canada's border.

"...refugees claiming asylum face a myriad of challenges."

Upon Arrival

Arriving at the Canadian border, refugees claiming asylum face a myriad of challenges. An interview by Immigration is the precursor to the all-important Personal Information Form (PIF), which must be submitted to Canadian officials within 28 days of arrival. But often the

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desire to begin life anew is overshadowed by the emotional trauma surrounding this process.

Then there are practical difficulties. Basic needs for shelter, food and clothing require immediate attention, but Welfare provides assistance only after an application has been filed. Medical and psychological issues attending to the needs of a broken body or a tortured spirit also have to be addressed. Registering children for school and finding legal representation add to the daunting list of responsibilities, stressful enough for those who speak some English, but even more so for those needing interpreters.

Colombian native, Norma, describes the struggle to organize "the mess in [her] head" with a simple and symbolic solution. She recalls: "I went to *Business Depot*...and bought myself an agenda and an accordion file with several compartments or folders inside. I was determined to put some order in my life and get rid of all that confusion once and for all.... To be honest, both the agenda and that file served as some sort of crutch that gave me some confidence the first few years in exile."

"Today's immigrant parents, like my own, try to protect their children..."

Factors Affecting Adjustment

- Personality Issues
- Age
- Country of Origin
- Socio-Economic Status
- School and Employment History of Refugees
- Personal Health
- Family Ambiance
- New Physical Environment
- Value System
- Response from Canadians

Re-building a Life

What factors determine how well immigrants will adjust to life in their host country? In the chapter, "How Soon and How Much", Borgoño explains that adjustment starts from the moment immigrants arrive and continues through life. The factors are physical, social, mental and environmental.

The need to find employment and familiarize themselves with a new home and a public transportation system are critical for the newcomers' self-reliance. Building new relationships to fill the void of old ones takes time, but it is also critical for integration and a sense of well-being.

Borgoño identifies one of the thorniest issues for newcomers: "Should they try first to improve their proficiency in the new language by attending full-day ESL classes or would it be wiser to work full time instead? Either way, their needs for survival have somehow to be met, fully or to a large extent, through income from work or financial assistance provided by government resources."

The challenges, however, involve not just the parents but also their

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children. Most children, he says, adapt reasonably well, and by and large it is "the younger children...who have a greater ease to internalize cultural values, patterns of behaviour, customs and social norms which lie beyond their own parents' cultural heritage."

Some children function as interpreters at school or for their parents' dealings with government departments or other organizations. (I personally recall having to explain magazine advertising to my father who was confused by follow-up letters from *Time* , which advertised magazine subscriptions for which he had already paid. He cancelled his subscription.) An aging parent may also have to rely on a son or daughter to handle the complexities involved in medical treatment.

Today's immigrant parents, like my own, try to protect their children from the trauma they have experienced. In fact, as Borgoño points out, "their sons and daughters give the impression of being unscathed...Had such traumas been directly revealed to them at a tender age, their impact would have most likely hindered the children's academic progress and/or unleashed unacceptable behaviours and attitudes, amounting to maladjustment to the school's values, expectations and discipline."

For some immigrant children, however, exposure to violence "[is] the natural way of resolving conflict.... These kids brought with them a heavy and emotional mental baggage...Solving conflict in an appropriate manner was a skill they had not acquired." In addition, mocking attitudes toward the new arrivals' language deficit reinforced these children's incompetence to resolve confrontations peacefully even further."

All immigrants go through an internal psychosocial process known as acculturation, "the progressive acceptance of the socio-cultural system prevailing in the receiving country; it materializes in diverse degrees of conscious or unconscious cultural integration and at varying rhythms or speeds."

People who change to a minimum degree identify with the lifestyles and values from their place of birth. Then there are immigrants who wish to shed their past experiences and more closely identify with the socio-cultural system of the host country. They adopt Canadian fashions, habits and sports. Some immigrants, however, will identify strongly with both worlds. These are the people who may choose to hyphenate their national identities (e.g. Colombian-Canadians). Do they feel, like myself, 'torn between two worlds'?

Torn Between Two Worlds will help you empathize with the journeys taken by those who seek refuge at our borders. It will broaden your understanding of the processes that challenge newcomers. It will personalize immigration policies, and it may also cause you to reminisce, as I have done.

Jose Borgoño concludes that "It is indeed tough to live in exile. But much tougher it is to be denied peace, freedom and love." Someone's newscast is another person's life.

Torn Between Two Worlds comes with useful Appendices: they include historical charts, immigration statistics, graphs, maps, and extensive listings of services to aid newcomers. ■

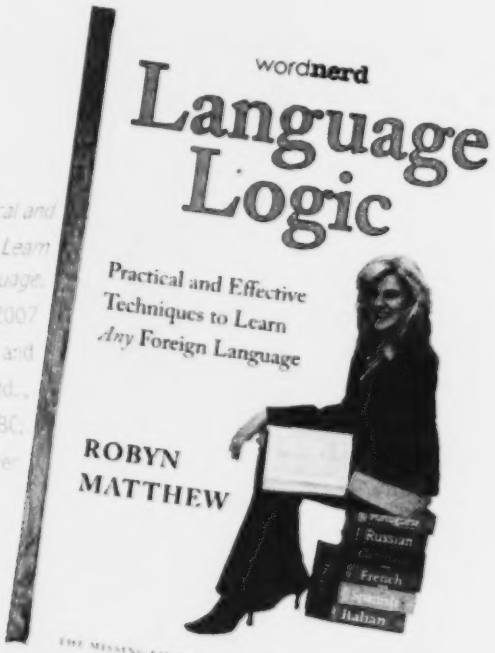
Martha Staigys teaches LINC and ESL for the Toronto District School Board. She has extensive experience in publishing and is a graphic designer with an interest in writing and graphic arts.

"Torn Between Two Worlds will help you empathize with the journeys taken by those who seek refuge at our borders."

BOOK REVIEW:

Language Logic: Practical and Effective Techniques to Learn Any Foreign Language

By Robyn Matthew



Language Logic: Practical and Effective Techniques to Learn Any Foreign Language, by Robyn Matthew, 2007. Word Nerd Language and Educational Services Ltd., Surrey, BC. 392 pp. softcover.

Review by Evelyn Pedersen

"She takes a strong stand against sudden immersion of the beginning student into the target language..."

Language Logic is a comprehensive reference volume suitable for teachers of ESL and of other languages, native speakers of English ambitious to learn a second language, and high intermediate to advanced ESL learners. As the title itself indicates, it is a collection of strategies for language learners, and when readers delve into its pages, they discover that it is indeed *logical*. Linguistically, it makes sense.

The book is divided into three major sections: Understanding Language Learning; Successful Language Learners; and The Four Basic Skills. In Part One Matthew contrasts first language acquisition in children with foreign language acquisition among adults, with special attention to the linguistic phenomena of "motherese" and "poverty of the stimulus." She takes a strong stand against sudden immersion of the beginning student into the target language, favouring rather a slower, more deliberate transition that first examines the structural aspects of the target language and discusses these in the mother tongue.

She stresses that "Part of the transition period involves comparing your first language with the target language until you have a firm grounding... You can progress much faster if you let your first language influence your learning, especially in the beginning" (p. 67). She goes on to warn that "By trying to bypass the transition period, language learners skip an essential step in the learning process, one that jeopardizes their long-term understanding and development in the language... You end up speaking the target language by stringing words together according to the sentence structure of your first language – and that's *not* what language learning is about" (p. 69).

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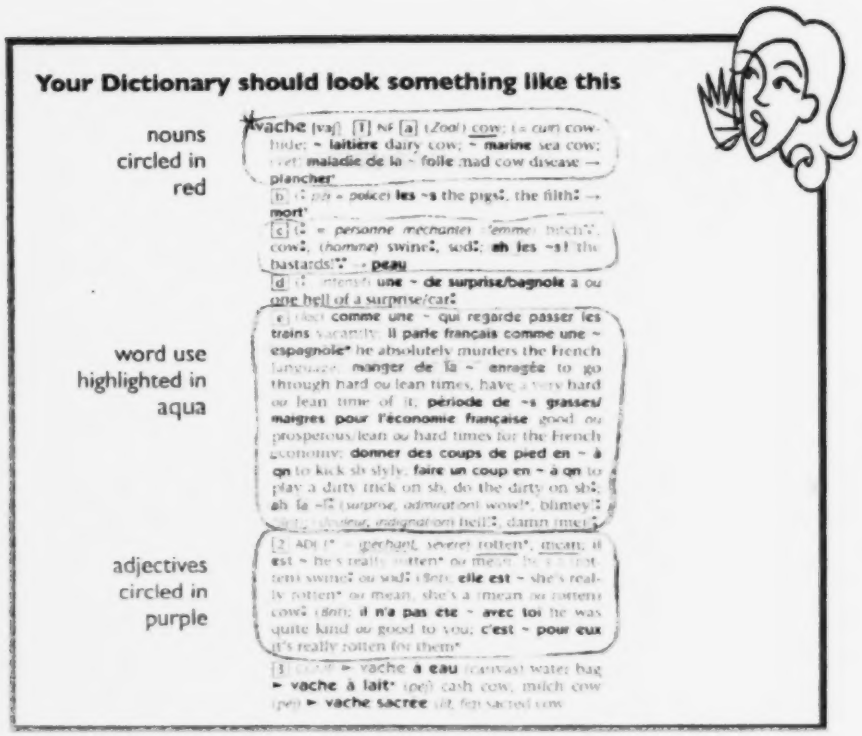
Your Dictionary should look something like this
nouns circled in red
word use highlighted in aqua
adjectives circled in purple
vache [vaʃ] [1] NF [a] (Zool) cow; (= cuir) cow-hide; ~ laitière dairy cow; ~ marine sea cow; (fig) maladie de la ~ folle mad cow disease → plancher
[b] (fig = police) les ~s the pigs, the filth → mort
[c] (= personne méchante) (femme) bitch, cow, (homme) swine, sod; ah les ~s! the bastards!; ~ de peau
[d] (intensif) une ~ de surprise/bagnole a ou one hell of a surprise/car
[e] (loc) comme une ~ qui regarde passer les trains vacantly; il parle français comme une ~ espagnole he absolutely murders the French language; manger de la ~ enragée to go through hard ou lean times, have a very hard ou lean time of it; période de ~s grasses/maigres pour l'économie française good ou prosperous/lean ou hard times for the French economy; donner des coups de pied en ~ à qn to kick sb slyly; faire un coup en ~ à qn to play a dirty trick on sb, do the dirty on sb; ah la ~! (surprise, admiration) wow!, blimey!; (douleur, indignation) hell!, damn (me)!
[2] ADJ (* = garçon) (sévère) rotten*, mean; il est ~ he's really rotten* ou mean; (fig = stupide) swine ou sod; (fam) elle est ~ she's really rotten* ou mean, she's a (mean ou rotten) cow; (fam) il n'a pas été ~ avec toi he was quite kind ou good to you; c'est ~ pour eux it's really rotten for them*
[3] COMP ► vache à eau (canvas) water bag ► vache à lait* (pej) cash cow, milch cow (pej) ► vache sacrée (lit, fig) sacred cow

"The bilingual dictionary then becomes a tracking device of personal progress in vocabulary acquisition."

(Continued from page 56)

In Part Two, Successful Language Learners, Matthew considers the necessary skills and tools successful learners employ. Here she looks at the factors that make language predictable, and how learners can use those features to maximize their progress. She demonstrates the usefulness of syntactic formulas in facilitating learning, and the importance of grammar and vocabulary for perfecting the four skills.

Of special interest to me was Matthew's take on the role of dictionaries. Where many teachers are eager to wean students off their bilingual dictionaries (regrettably, I have been among this band), Matthew argues for their effectiveness in vocabulary building and in understanding the structure of the target language, even at the advanced level. She demonstrates how to use each side of the dictionary – first language, and target language – together with a personal notation system, to maximum advantage. The bilingual dictionary then becomes a tracking device of personal progress in vocabulary acquisition, as well as a frequency measure of various words and phrases among native speakers. Brilliant!

Theoretical foundations laid, Matthew turns her attention to the nitty-gritty of the four skills in Part Three. For each skill she details the levels of progression, and recommends corresponding strategies and resources. She considers bugbears such as pronunciation

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and spelling, as well as comprehending native speakers who invariably *talk too fast*. She also examines different types of interactions and goals of conversation, the issue of accents, and the difference between translation and interpretation.

Each chapter in *Language Logic* begins with a checklist of learning objectives. Each is enhanced with fun graphics, charts, and textboxes that include crucial concepts for language learners, commonly held beliefs debunked, "word nerd" tips and techniques, anecdotes from popular culture, supplementary information and examples, quotations from various writers and linguists, and helpful definitions from the *Collins Dictionary*.

At the end of the volume there is a bibliography of books, films, and television clips that Matthew has referenced in the text.

"The insights she shares are timely and practical..."

Matthew's writing style is passionate and supportive, albeit repetitive at some points. The insights she shares are timely and practical, and so *logical* I could have kicked myself for not thinking of them!

More than just a catalogue of techniques, this text is rooted in second language acquisition research, and has been field-tested in the author's own experience of mastering a foreign language. Matthew stresses, "These strategies work – I know because they worked for me."

Language Logic is a reference tool for native speakers of English. Its language level is generally too sophisticated for most intermediate ESL students, unless their instructor excerpts and simplifies selected passages for outside reading.

This volume would be most effectively utilized by the ESL instructor who takes it as summer (or subway!) reading, digests it, and in the following semester carefully distills its principles and strategies for her students.

It is ideally suited as supplementary reading for TESL training programs.

For native speakers considering a career change to ESL, it provides an insightful overview of the process and challenges of second language acquisition.

For language teachers, what better foundation of understanding can there be? ■

Evelyn Pedersen teaches in the University of Toronto's English Language Program, and is a frequent presenter at TESL conferences. She first met Robyn Matthew on a Toronto subway platform early one breezy Saturday as they awaited the first train of the day.

BOOK REVIEW:

Language Profiles and *Languages Matter!*

By Cathy Haghighat

Language Profiles Volumes I, II, III (2002, 2005) by Cathy Haghighat, Toronto: World Languages Publishing House. Softcover, 8½x 11, spiral bound... Vol. I, 438 pp; Vol. II, 440 pp; Vol. III, 522 pp. Volumes I and II, $39.95 plus shipping. Volume III $49.95 plus shipping. Languages Matter! (2008) by Cathy Haghighat Softcover, 8½ x 11, spiral bound, 189 pages. Toronto: World Languages Publishing House. $29.95 plus shipping.

"...Language Profiles also provides in-depth linguistic comparisons between the target language and English."

Review by Fran Marshall

In her introduction to *Language Profiles,* teacher and author Cathy Haghighat asks, "Who can resist the lure of delving into a new language, country and culture? Language is but a mirror through which we can see a people's culture and history reflected."

For anyone involved in teaching, learning or researching languages, the three volumes of *Language Profiles* provide that intriguing mirror.

Language Profiles is an encyclopedic resource for teachers, volunteers, international language learners and, yes, even families.

In this massive work, Cathy Haghighat has researched and compiled comprehensive profiles of sixty-seven world languages, including the principal languages of Canada's aboriginal peoples. Each language profile provides readers a wealth of information, detailed historical and linguistic data, as well as descriptive summaries of the dialects common to the countries and regions where the language is used. In a feature that ESL teachers will find attractive, *Language Profiles* also provides in-depth linguistic comparisons between the target language and English.

The three volumes are organized in sections, by language. Each section is introduced by a divider page containing a map of the region or country, samples of

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the script of the language profiled, its alphabet or syllabary and the country's flag. The most recent volume, *Languages Matter!*, presents these in attractive colour.

The sections within each profile are clearly laid out under bold headings: Historical Background, Linguistic Background, Linguistic Comparison, Cultural Background and related Sources and References. The profiles vary in length – in Volume III, for example, the profile on Albanian is 18 pages long, the one on English comprises 54 pages, while that profiling Arabic in Volume II is 30 pages in length.

"The sections within each profile are clearly laid out under bold headings..."

The cultural background section of each profile provides a wealth of information about the education system, religions, special celebrations, marriage customs, and social structure. The author has also included information on famous people and noted literary works from each linguistic group. In addition, each profile provides suggested references for further research.

A newly-published (2008) companion book in the series, *Languages Matter!*, draws together the profiles of the six official languages of the United Nations: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Individual *Language Profiles* are also available for the most common language groups found in Canadian schools. These include Arabic, Chinese, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Pashtu, Persian, Punjabi, Russian/Ukrainian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu, and Vietnamese. They are priced according to size, from $11.95 to $14.95. Each book also contains order forms at the back. For further information and for ordering, access the websites below.

Language Profiles, Volumes I, II, and *III*, are excellent resources for all institutions where the study of languages is a part of the curriculum. In LINC/ESL programs, secondary schools, colleges, universities and libraries, these unique and encyclopedic volumes will enhance and enrich the understanding and appreciation of the cultures and linguistic backgrounds of a diverse world population.

One half of the world speaks only 15 different languages. If you could speak Mandarin, English, Hindi and Russian, you could converse with more than three billion people.

The United Nations has declared 2008 the *International Year of Languages*, with emphasis on UNESCO's theme, 'Languages Matter'. Through technological advances, our world has become much smaller. Respect for all languages will surely lead to peaceful relations among nations. And such respect begins with knowledge.

I highly recommend these reader-friendly volumes by teacher and author Cathy Haghighat as valuable resources for all language centers. ■

Fran Marshall is an author, editor and ESL Consultant. She is a frequent presenter and keynote speaker at ESL conferences across the province, including the annual TESL Ontario conference.

Language Profiles

Language Profiles are designed to help teachers, volunteers, and learners discover other cultures and language backgrounds. It is also a great resource for families investigating their cultural and historical heritage.

You can order a specific language profile or purchase a series of three books with a collection of over twenty language profiles in each volume.

Each language profile includes language-specific alphabet or script, its historical background, linguistic background, linguistic comparisons, and cultural background. The cultural background provides information about education, names, traditional marriage customs, family life, religion, calendar, celebrations, literature/culture, and other relevant information.

To order or for more information go to **www.languageprofiles.com**

Cathy Haghighat is a former ESL teacher, ESL department head, and language trainer for the ESL Part 1 Additional Qualifications course at the University of Toronto, but to many she is best known for a column on languages she wrote for TESL Ontario's *Contact*. The collected columns have been published as a three-volume work, *Language Profiles*. Her most recent publication (2008) is *Language Matters!*, celebrating the United Nations' proclamation of the year 2008 as the International Year of Languages.

Language Profiles